MEMORIES AND NOTES

SIR SIDNEY COLVIN

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MEMORIES AND NOTES
OF
PERSONS AND PLACES

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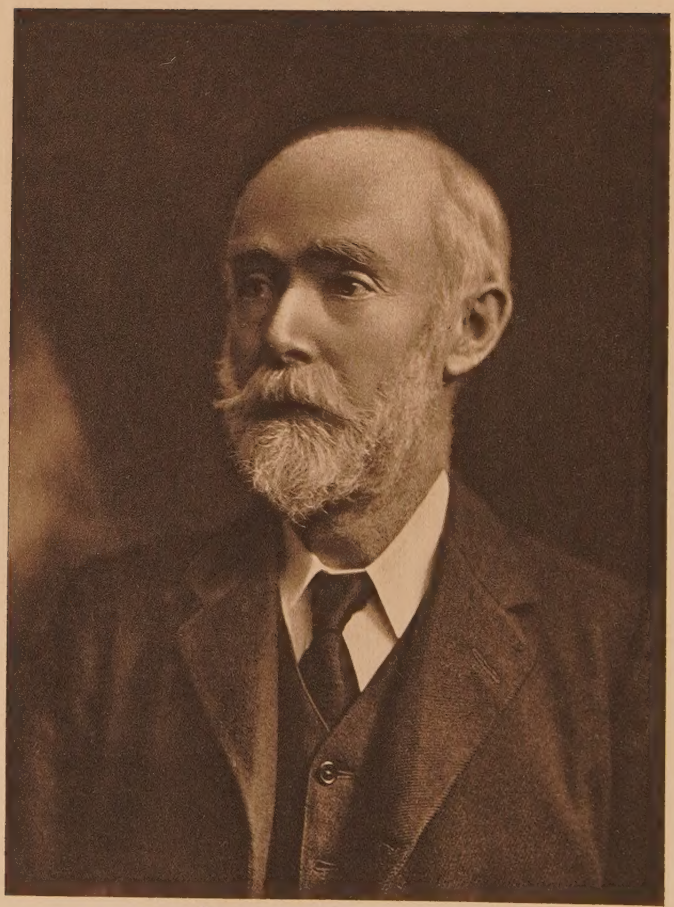

Sidney Colvin

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MEMORIES & NOTES

OF

PERSONS & PLACES

1852-1912

BY

SIR SIDNEY COLVIN

LONDON

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1921

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Portrait of the Author . . . . *Frontispiece*

To

MY WIFE

DEAR, I have dedicated one book to you already, and have been asking myself to whom I should dedicate this, which considering my age and infirmities is as good as bound to be my last. I thought at first of offering it to one or other of those younger friends whose attachment is the pride and comfort of our declining years. But on reflection it came home to me that a dedication to any one of these would in truth only be at one remove a dedication to you. For it is you who have, if not in the first instance brought me all their friendships, as long ago you brought me that of Stevenson, at any rate attached them to the pair of us in far firmer bonds than I could ever have forged by myself alone. And so I conclude that the simplest way is to repeat my former offering and lay this book also, for what it may be worth, directly at your feet. But I shall do so with a difference, inasmuch as, following the old practice of the Epistle Dedicatory, I shall proceed to remind you, and in so doing inform the reader, how the volume has come to be what it is.

Well, then, you know how from very early days I

began to try my prentice hand at various forms of critical writing—for of creative I knew myself incapable—in order to define and if it might be to communicate the pleasures which were to me the salt of life. You know also how circumstances drew me before long to the special vocation of art critic—I hate the label, but it cannot be shirked—and thence to that of Slade Professor at Cambridge, and thence to that of practical expert and museum keeper. These have been my responsible occupations through some forty years of my life, and most of such literary work as I have found time for has been in connection with them. But absorbing as such official duties may have been, enjoyable as I may have found them, they were not such as to deaden what other interests or faculties may have been born or early awakened in me. And throughout my museum years, whether at Cambridge or in London, I always nursed the hope of one day getting free to work no longer upon the productions, however treasurable and fascinating, of man's hands, but upon objects which had always interested me even more deeply still, namely poetry and the scenes of nature and the characters of men and women.

Accordingly soon after my retirement I set to work, as you know, upon a task which seemed urgently to call for the doing, namely a critical life of the poet Keats in accordance with the present state of our knowledge. At the same time, being over-sanguine as to my own working powers, I entered into an agreement to prepare a book in several volumes which should in the main be one of personal recollec-

tions. But of recollections with a difference:—it was to be a record of the most lively impressions I could definitely recall as having been made upon me since boyhood not only by persons but by scenes and places, and not only by these but by events and movements, more especially in literature and art; and was to include in some cases a comparison of those impressions of the moment with such revised opinions and judgments as I might entertain to-day.

But retirement from the public service, in bringing me leisure, did not bring me strength, and the wear-and-tear of spirit we all underwent during the war came to add its effects to the normal sapping power of age. Hence it came about that the Keats book took a good deal longer to prepare than I had calculated. And it soon became clear that I should not be able to carry out my other scheme on anything like the scale first proposed. All I could hope to do was to throw together a certain number, enough between them to fill one volume, both of the personal memories most vividly present to my mind and of impressions of the external scenes which had most interested me. The volume so designed is now in your hands. The persons, as most readers would, I suppose, desire, fill far the larger number of pages. The space they severally occupy depends, let it be clearly understood, not at all on their relative human or historical importance but solely on the much or little that I happen to remember of them. The places described are in a few instances inseparably connected with them, but in a few others are independent.

The figures I have tried to call up are for the most part those of famous men with whom it was my good fortune to come early in life into contact, close or casual as the case might be. It was never my habit to keep diaries or make notes of conversations, so that the matters I have set down are strictly and solely such as have chanced to stick in my memory; the single exception being in the case of Shelley's friend Trelawny, of my one and only talk with whom I did, as it happens, make notes the evening after it had occurred. The impressions of places, on the other hand, were in two or three instances (indicated in the text by dates) recorded promptly after they were received.

While this volume was planning, I had meant that among its contents there should be a full chapter on Cambridge. I suppose no son of Cambridge has cause to look on his university with more grateful affection than I. Going up as a home-taught freshman with the vaguest idea how I might stand in comparison with school-trained lads of my age, I had the satisfaction of doing nearly as well as any of them in the classical studies which were my choice, and of winning first a scholarship and then a fellowship at Trinity. Then, after a few years of work as journalist in London, promiscuous critical work in which the special study of art and the history of art bore a chief place, I was offered the opportunity first of going back to the university as Slade Professor, and before long of coupling with that pleasant office the other, then newly created, of director of the Fitzwilliam Museum. So that Cambridge has been in the fullest sense the *alma*

mater or kind nursing mother to whom I owed alike training and recognition and opportunity. How much of sentiment, of haunting love and affection, is mingled with the reasoned gratitude and loyalty I owe her is a question which I often ask myself and do not find it very easy to answer. It is one of the great virtues of Cambridge that to false sentiment she is an enemy, and that any true partaker of her spirit becomes impatient of professions, even by himself to himself, that have in them any taint of unreality or claptrap.

At any rate, of the Cambridge familiar to me both as an undergraduate and as a don I had meant for the purposes of this book to try and call up what living memories I could. But for one thing I discovered that some quite indelible impressions of particular corners and features and aspects of the place, which I had thought might be almost private to myself, had been provokingly forestalled more than half a century ago by Edward FitzGerald (of whom I have to make further mention later on) in that little masterpiece *Euphranor*. For another thing, dipping into the volume in which everything that has been or could be said or felt about Cambridge, in praise or dispraise or description or recollection in every mood or manner for the last three centuries and more, was collected with such ingenious industry a few years ago by Mr. Sydney Waterlow, I found that I had not so much refreshed my mind on the subject, which was what I had hoped, as clogged and confused it. For a last thing, I had the delight of reading the beautiful pages in which Cambridge in general, with Trinity in particular,

has lately been praised by one of the most learned and famous of her living sons, my friend Sir James Frazer. But in that delight I found also an effectual warning against rivalry. And so it came about that Cambridge has slipped out of my scheme.

With Cambridge have gone certain personalities that I should have been glad to keep in, such as those two successive masters and stately figure-heads of my own college in my early days, Whewell and Thompson; such as the famous classical coach Shilleto, whom I can still see in my mind's eye, at his table littered with snuff-boxes and bandana handkerchiefs,—still hear while he pounds into my sense the stiffest meanings of Thucydides; or such again as J. W. Clark, equally keen and accomplished in the pursuits of natural history and architectural history and amateur stage-craft; or those two fine contrasted types of classical scholar and public orator, W. G. Clark, the most frankly urbane and straightforwardly courteous of men, and Jebb, probably the most faultless Grecian of them all, whom you yourself remember well, and whose tensely strung nature and ever-tingling nerves did not prevent him from being a successful man of the world and fine representative of his university in Parliament—But here I am, getting thoughts of Cambridge and Cambridge friends in after all by a side door, and prolonging my dedication beyond your or the reader's patience. So no more,—except one word of warm thanks to Sir Philip Burne-Jones and such other friends as have given me leave to print letters of which they hold the copyright.

CHAPTER I

AN EAST-SUFFOLK BOYHOOD AND SOME POETS

The older one grows—I believe the observation is trite, and in my case it is certainly true—the more vividly does the mind become haunted by its earliest experiences, by memories of what one suffered and enjoyed and imagined and did or longed to do as a child and boy. My mother had a horror of schools for her sons, partly founded, I think, for she was a good deal of a reader, on the notions she had gathered from Cowper's *Tirocinium*. My dear lovable compliant father tenderly humoured her in all things; and so the three of us, of whom I was by several years the youngest, were brought up under tutors at home. By all that I could ever learn, there was nothing much likeable or promising about me whether as boy or hobbledehoy; certainly nothing in the eyes of the girl-cousins (we had no sisters) who tried with little success to teach me dancing and generally put a polish on me. But at least I was dead keen always on whatever I was about, although extremely shy and secret in regard to the things I most cared for. The home was a country-house three miles from Woodbridge in East Suffolk, with five hundred acres of land and more of shooting attached. My father loved the place.

Most of his days were spent in the conduct of his business as partner in a leading London firm of East India merchants, but in the intervals he could spare for home his chief refreshment was to stroll in his gardens or over his acres, or ride on his big bay gelding, Prince, about the country lanes or in and out of Woodbridge on his duties as a magistrate.

Either as merchants or civil servants my people on both sides of the house had been connected with India for several generations. My mother's father, William Butterworth Bayley, whom I remember as a commanding and withal humorous grand gentleman of the old school, wearing a high black stock and swallow-tail coat, had been acting governor-general in the interval between Lord Amherst and Lord William Bentinck, and for many years after his return was chairman of the board of directors of the old East India Company. My father's next younger brother, John, was in my boyish days lieutenant-governor of the North-West provinces. When the mutiny came and threatened ruin to our *ràj* and all connected with it, I well remember how my father's home and country interests were the sole things which enabled the dear man at moments to forget his cares—" my most cruel cares," as I can still after these sixty and odd years hear his agonized voice one day calling them. Cruel indeed they were, including besides the prospect of public calamity and private ruin the intensest personal anxieties for beloved kinsfolk exposed to the horrors of the time. Sometimes the strain would end in relief, as in the case of my cousin James Colvin, cooped

up almost without stores in a hurriedly half-fortified bungalow at Arrah, with seven or eight English and fifty-odd faithful Sikhs, by a whole horde of Sepoy mutineers well armed and provided. "There is much in common," writes Sir George Trevelyan, "between Leonidas dressing his hair before he went forth to his last fight and young Colvin laughing over his rice and salt while the bullets spattered on the wall like hail." Relief came to this small garrison almost at the last gasp; but more often the issue was tragic. A brilliant young sister of my mother's, being with child at the time, was forced to ride for her life the fifty miles from Shahjehanpore to Bareilly, and never got over it. Most harrowing of all, my aforesaid uncle John Colvin in his seat of government at Agra had to bear more than almost any other among the great civil servants of the stress and burden of the time, and died of his task before the final issue was made sure.* He and my father had been brought up at St. Andrew's together and were devotedly attached; John was the younger but much the stronger of the two, and again I can hear my father calling to mind aloud in his grief how if any other youngster was bad to him "John would always knock him down—always knock him down."

* See J. W. Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War in India*, vol. iii, p. 416, "John Russell Colvin died on September 9, 1857, and History rejoices to accord him a place in the front rank of those who died for their country during that tremendous epoch, more painfully and not less gloriously than those who died on the battle-field." His life has been written by his son, the late Sir Auckland Colvin.

My father's love of our country home was not shared by my mother. She had imbibed from the writings of Ruskin, whom she knew and idolized, an idea that hill or mountain majesty was a necessary feature of landscape beauty, and a consequent contempt for such quiet lowland scenery as that about our home. To make up for what she held its poverty she lavished care and money on the beautifying of the grounds and gardens, matters which appealed also to my father, so that for their relatively small scale they came to be among the most admired in that countryside. She insisted also on a three or four months' annual change for the whole household, generally to some hired house in the outskirts of London, occasionally to Devonshire. I do not think either of my parents at all realized, readers though they were, the literary interests and associations which attached to our neighbouring country and coast. Certainly I was in youth never made to realize them. To my mother I cannot be grateful enough for one thing: she set me reading *Rob Roy* aloud to her when I was eight years old; the other Waverleys followed; and subsequent years have only deepened and confirmed my delight in the imaginary world of which I was thus early made free. It used to be a foolish habit among superfine and ultra-modern critics, during part of my life, to pooh-pooh Walter Scott as no artist, and admiration of him as an obsolete fashion. It is a joy in my old age to see him coming, among the wiser even of the youngest, to be fully acknowledged for what he was, that is easily the second greatest creator

in our language since Shakespeare, and for all his careless ways and long-winded openings an instinctive artist in crucial scenes and moments unsurpassed.*

Going back upon my own boyish cares and preoccupations, I recall in them an odd mixture of the civilized and the barbarous. To the passion for Scott there presently, before I was fifteen, succeeded a passion for Spenser. Entirely for myself and without direction, I had discovered the *Faery Queene* in my father's library, and insatiably devoured and set about doing my best to imitate it. Not for the world would I have let any one into the secret of my absurd attempts and ambitions, but on summer mornings not long after dawn must needs clamber down from my bedroom window, and go off to the stable-shed beyond the home paddocks, where a beloved little Arab mare was housed, the gift to me of an old East-Indian general my godfather, and in her company alone, nursing her muzzle the while, sit and spin out of my head the stanzas of my poem. The theme, if I remember aright, was one of mythical ancient British history taken from Spenser himself. But other and for aught I can remember alternate mornings were spent not less eagerly in visiting, long before the dew was off the grass, the night-lines I had laid the evening before in the pools of one or the other of our two near brooks to catch the big silver-bellied eels: lines barbarously baited, for the prey would take no other lure, with the

* There is a masterly chapter "On the prose of Sir Walter Scott" in the *Collected Essays* of the late, too early lost, Professor Verrall of Cambridge (Cambridge University, 1903).

unfledged young of hedgerow birds stolen from the nest. A certain bandy-legged stable-help, I remember, was my confidant and instigator in these and divers baser kinds of sport, among them rat-hunting with a thorough-bred little Dandie Dinmont terrier bitch who shared her affections equally between him and me. In other and more avowable pastimes, I suppose a little later, I was equally keen, as in captaining a village team of cricketers, or tramping the turnips after partridges, or standing waiting for rocketing pheasants at the spinney corners, or riding with the harriers kept by a neighbouring captain of militia, who, fine sportsman as he was and looked on his gallant roan Silverlocks, had a somewhat ungrateful task in what was essentially not a hunting but a shooting country. A clumsy horseman and an indifferent shot, nothing could exceed the zest with which I pursued these commonplace country sports, unless it were that with which in the same years (say from twelve to seventeen) I used to devour my Scott and Shakespeare and *Faery Queene* and *Modern Painters* and *Stones of Venice* (for from my mother I had by this time fully caught the Ruskin enthusiasm), and learn long screeds of them, both verse and prose, by heart. These relatively high-flown literary tastes did not at all debar me from delighting in Marryat and Mayne Reid and Fenimore Cooper and planning for myself under their inspiration futures of the wildest adventure.

In the same years I was getting some formal education under an elderly tutor, who neither by years nor disposition was any sort of friend or companion.

But he must have been as capable as he was remarkable for his dyed whiskers and corpulent figure and choleric temper; seeing that when the time came for going to Cambridge I found to my surprise that I was as well on almost in the classics as picked lads from the public schools, and in modern languages much better.

Well, from this queerly brought-up boyhood I retain, as I began by saying, impressions of nature and of natural beauty more intense and abiding than any that have been stamped upon me since. Not from the holiday sojourns or excursions during which I was especially on the look-out for such impressions, as in visits to family friends among the Galloway moors or on the slopes of the Wicklow mountains, nor even from carriage tours taken with my father over the then untunnelled Simplon Pass or the length of the French and Italian Riviera from Nice to Genoa,—it is not from these, anticipate and enjoy them as intensely as I might, that the sense of natural beauty sank into my soul, but from the unpretentious scenery of home, the familiar and daily haunts of my childhood and boyhood. Our immediate countryside was not absolutely level like some parts adjacent, but broken into gentle undulations of some eighty to a hundred feet, with views of moderate extent from the crown of each rise (one rise being actually dignified with the name of Beacon Hill), and in each of the hollows a brook winding its way through water-meadows towards the near estuary of the Deben. A local poet, Bernard Barton, to whom I shall presently return, describes

faithfully enough the course of one of these brooks which he best knew :—

> It flows through flowery meads,
> Gladdening the herds that on its margin browse ;
> Its quiet bounty feeds
> The alders that o'ershade it with their boughs.
>
> Gently it murmurs by
> The village churchyard, with a plaintive tone
> Of dirge-like melody,
> For worth and beauty modest as its own.
>
> More gaily now it sweeps
> By the small school-house, in the sunshine bright,
> And o'er the pebbles leaps,
> Like happy hearts by holiday made light.

Looking back, I find it hard to discriminate which of my delights remembered from those days were due to pure pleasure of the visual faculties, and which, or how much of each, to an admixture of other elements, sensuous imaginative or active. Among ocular impressions pure and simple, some that I retain the most vividly are of hawthorn trees in flush and snowy guelder-rose balls and laburnum-lamps magically golden ; of the miraculous spray and sparkle of colour and freshness in a certain wood, the floor all carpeted with wild hyacinth and primrose, wood-sorrel and wood anemone, the new-budded twigs all sparkling with points of yellow or pale-green light ; of the swaying of alders and feathery birch-boughs all day long in summer air, and the ruffling of the seas of sorrel-reddened meadow-grass beneath them. Of the joy of poring

hour after hour over the half-translucent amber depths and flickering green reflections of the brook, where its pools lay shaded under sweeping chestnut boughs. Of crossing a stile at evening into a certain favourite high field open to the north and west, whence the spirit could go voyaging among the encrimsoned archipelagoes of the sunset sky, while dusk and mist were dimming the valley at my feet. Of the enchantment of winter frosts, with icicles fringeing the eaves, and every bough and twig of the naked garden trees glittering transfigured in the tingling air. Or again of Sunday afternoons at church in summer, where through the open side-door facing our seats the familiar landscape of cottages and meadows and wooded slopes lay coursed over by the shadows of travelling clouds, while the cawing of the rooks and crooning of the stock-doves floated in from the tree-tops to temper the discord of the rustic psalmody led by our humpbacked village cobbler. Or of poring caressingly on the deep-folded splendour and opulent globed softness of the June roses, with their colours ranging from the tenderest blushing or sallow flesh-tint to reds that deepened almost into black. Or of the delicious half-transparency of the yellow and red raspberries with the morning dew on them, and the size and succulence of the purple-black bursting figs and blushing peaches waiting to be gathered warm on the garden-wall,—but here, for I did not content myself with looking at them, the pleasures of sight merge themselves in memory into those of a more carnal sense.

Turning to joys enhanced by the elements of roused

imagination, how often have I sat musing among the spreading boughs of a great old Spanish chestnut-tree (somehow associated in my boyish mind with the Armada), whence the view of the pleasant Playford hollow included a few acres of reedy marsh known as "the mere": a name that stirred my imagination mightily, and I can well remember how I tried in vain—for this mere had no open water—to make it serve me for King Arthur's death-scene, or how anon, having had the idea thrust upon me that its mud was "bottomless," I would convert it into a morass tragically fraught with histories of engulfed armies.

In moods like this the knowledge of the sea's neighbourhood to our home, and of its sending twice a day its marginal waters inland, flooding the mud-banks of the estuaries, and lifting and stroking back their water-weeds, until it was met by the outflow of our meadow streams,—this knowledge helped to dilate the childish spirit with a sense of ulterior mystery, and of the possibility of great world-voyages lying not remotely beyond the horizon lines. I remember this sense receiving a queer special point and significance from the fact that not far from the place where our two brooks, the Lark and the Fynn, having run together into one, broaden out to form a tidal creek of the Deben, there stood a public house having for sign a grotesque carved and scarlet-painted head and shoulders of a red lion (the Red Lion of Martlesham) which had served, we knew, in old time as the figure-head of an ocean-going ship.

But more, I honestly believe and am not ashamed

to own, more than the direct disinterested pleasures of the sense of sight, more even than the stirrings of an awakened world-imagination, there was a third cause which helped in those growing years to stamp images of nature upon my memory, and that was the excitement of the chasing or sporting instincts which went along with them, and which we owe, I suppose, to long lines of predatory ancestors. That instinctive tension of the nerves and tingling of the pulses in pursuit, or at the mere presence of wild creatures small or great, disposes the faculties to a peculiarly vivid reception and retention of all accompanying impressions. At the stage the world has reached, I do not see that there is morally much to be said in favour of men chasing and killing dumb animals for pleasure, or even for the sake of the exercise, which some forms of chase involve, of the virtues of physical courage, skill, or endurance. Personally, therefore, I have long been a convinced if reluctant convert from field sports; yet I cannot but fear that much of our truest, deepest and even most poetical love of nature may go with them. It is all very well for a sentimentalist like Leigh Hunt to write (as he did more effectively perhaps than any one since) against the pleasures that "strew the brakes with agonies of feathered wounds." Hunt was brought up within the precincts of Christ's Hospital, with only three weeks' country holiday in the year. But take the case of Wordsworth, and see with what gusto he recalls his boyish delights of bird's-nesting and woodcock-snaring, and how fully he acknowledges the share which these excitements

had along with others in forging the links that bound his soul to nature. For my own insignificant part, I know that I should never have felt as I do the charm of dew-silvered morning meadows or translucent sleeping water-pools if I had not been used as a boy to visit them at dawn intent on nothing but seeing whether my night-lines were stretched or slack. Nor should I cherish half such visions, "felt in the blood and felt along the heart," of the red and pale gold woods of autumn quivering in bright November air, but for the hours I have stood expectant beside them with the gun; nor take half such delight in the soft undulations and tender colouring and atmospheric mystery of the winter fields, if I had not galloped over them with quickened pulses in many a hare-hunt. But enough—it is not of myself that I set out to speak, but of the country-side where I was brought up and of some poets of whom it has been at one time or another the home.

These are perhaps as many and as distinguished as any other area of equal extent in England can boast, always excepting the strongly contrasted Lake Country. It is interesting to note with what different feelings they have regarded the country of their birth or adoption. Perhaps it is hardly fair to bring in the earliest of them, Giles Fletcher (brother to the better known Phineas), who in the days of James I held the living of Alderton, one of our characteristic coast-ward parishes of half-reclaimed heath-land bordering upon the marshes of a river mouth. Giles was in poetry one of the later and weaklier offshoots of the

literary school of Spenser. He had distinguished himself while still a bachelor of arts at Trinity with his poems *Christ's Victory* and *Christ's Triumph*, and had also been an admired preacher of university sermons in the same spirit of devout and dulcet Christian allegory. He was ardently attached to his college and university, and languished in his rural preferment, finding the people savage and the place unhealthy. "He was settled," writes Thomas Fuller, "in Suffolk, which hath the best and worst aire in England; best about Bury, and worst on the Sea-Side, where Master Fletcher was beneficed. His clownish and low-parted parishioners (having nothing but their shoes high about them) valued not their Pastour according to his worth; which disposed him to melancholy and hastened his dissolution." The worst and best air in England indeed! What would the sententious and sagacious Fuller have said if he could have foreseen how in the whirligig of time opinion concerning the salubrity of our seacoast climate would spin round, and how Felixstowe for instance (which is only five miles across the ferry at the Deben mouth from Alderton) would change from the hamlet I can myself remember to some mile-and-a-half's length of smart and smiling villa frontage, and how guide-books would babble of its "invariably invigorating air," and doctors send their patients to it from far and wide?

Coming down the best part of two centuries from the days of the grumbler Phineas Fletcher, we find the chief of our East-Suffolk poets, Crabbe, inclined to take a view of the local scenes and characters not much

less disparaging than his. Our countryside must be content to have produced in Crabbe not a lover or eulogist, but a son who by natural gift might have been almost as pre-eminent in the realist family of creative writers as Scott (who always generously insisted on seeing in him an equal) in the romantic. Remember that when Crabbe had long done his best work Scott had only written his poems, things that for all their vigour and charm do not strike very deep, and that his great creative work of the Waverley novels was still to come. In his own day and way Crabbe was an actual pioneer without rival in the delineation of the scenes, characters, and passions of the humble provincial world which he best knew. His life until he was near thirty was almost entirely spent at the coast town of Aldborough, within a score of miles of my home, and from it is drawn the main part of the inspiration of the most living of his works, *The Borough*. His volumes were of course in my father's book-shelves, but my attention was never called to them. Had it been so called, I wonder whether I should in some half-conscious way have been put off by that prevailing discord between his matter and his manner which is, as I think, the great bar to Crabbe's holding the place in our literature he might otherwise have deserved. For in spite of the recorded high admiration of his work by the finest spirits of his own and of a later day—as Scott, Charles James Fox, Wordsworth, Byron, Newman, Tennyson, Fitz-Gerald—in spite of this, it must be acknowledged that with lovers of poetry in general he has failed to hold

his own. Squalid tragedy however intense, descriptive detail however exact and vivid, unflinchingly stern or sarcastically amused veracity and insight in human portraiture however varied, have somehow ceased to find their way to our acceptance through a literary medium artificial and outworn as was the ten-syllable couplet in the mode in which Crabbe employed it. When to-day we think of him as a real poet holding rank among other poets, it is not the staple of his work that we have in mind, but exceptional intensely imagined passages such as occur, for instance, in that fine dramatic lyric *Sir Eustace Grey*; and then we cannot but remember how to stir up Crabbe's poetic faculty to this pitch it took a severe illness followed by a strong remedial course of opium. It is but occasionally that in the main body of his narrative work he rises into real poetry; oftenest in the indignant vein; seldomer in that of pathos or tenderness; in that of natural description more rarely still, for his quality as an observer of nature is essentially scientific; thus in dealing with the flowers and vegetation of his country-side he can never leave out the details that shall remind us of his being a fully trained botanist. His use of the traditional medium, the heroic couplet, sometimes tempts him to make obvious rhetorical or epigrammatical points where such points are out of place; sometimes also to employ a stilted or sententious or abstract phrase where a plain phrase would have conveyed his meaning better. But in the main he uses the style and language natural to his own temperament, and these are not the style and language

of poetry at all, but of prose; and prose does not become poetry by the mere fact of being mechanically chopped into lengths. Crabbe's true place in literature, one often feels, had not the Popeian tradition of his day set him on a mistaken track, should have been that of a great, in his own day unprecedented, master of humble human narrative and detailed natural description, but in prose rather than in verse.

Not that the passion for descriptive detail in Crabbe's work implies in him much share of the modern sentiment of nature or delight in nature for nature's sake. On the contrary, more exclusively even than other and older poets of his age, he judges nature not by her power of pleasing the contemplative and disinterested part of man, but by her aptitude to serve or thwart him in his practical necessities. Accordingly he condemns and satirizes the scenery, as he does the manners, of the Aldborough coast, which had been intensely stamped upon his observation and imagination from childhood. Not merely does he make it a part of the penalty of the abhorred and cruel Peter Grimes—

> At the same time the same dull views to see,
> The bounding marsh-bank and the blighted tree;
> The water only, when the tides were high,
> When low, the mud half-covered and half-dry;
> The sun-burnt tar that blisters on the planks,
> And bank-side stakes in their uneven ranks:—

not merely does he punish his criminal with sights which might interest pleasurably a modern painter or lover of the picturesque, but speaking in his own

person, he thus resents the colour and variety of the unprofitable vegetation of the coast :—

> Lo ! where the heath, with withering brake grown o'er,
> Lends the light turf that warms the neighbouring poor.
> From thence a length of burning sand appears,
> Where the thin harvest waves its wither'd ears ;
> Rank weeds, that every art and care defy,
> Reign o'er the land, and rob the blighted rye :
> There thistles stretch their prickly arms afar,
> And to the ragged infant threaten war ;
> There poppies nodding, mock the hope of toil ;
> There the blue bugloss paints the sterile soil ;
> Hardy and high, above the slender sheaf,
> The slimy mallow waves her silky leaf ;
> O'er the young shoot the charlock throws a shade,
> And clasping tares cling round the sickly blade ;
> With mingled tints the rocky coasts abound,
> And a sad splendour vainly shines around.

These are examples of Crabbe's descriptive work near its best. But a similar or even more minute cataloguing method serves him less well when not the stationary but the shifting, and less yet when the sudden and stormy, phenomena of nature are concerned. These need a broader sweep of vision and words more concentrated to express them. Turn for instance to those contrasted effects of calm and storm at sea from the opening of the same poem, *The Borough*, which drew when they were first published the enthusiastic praise of Gifford. The observations recorded in the fourteen lines of the storm passage are minutely accurate : the last three or four show a true knowledge of geological cause and effect ; but I remember to

have heard a more effective piece of sea-description in half a dozen words from the lips of an inland-bred serving woman of that peasant race he knew so well. She had been brought to the coast for the first time in her life on a ruffling day, and after looking at the sea for a few moments said in her Suffolk accents and in a tone not of approval, "Wha', do it alluz goo *muddlin'* about like that?"

The chief market town and inland centre of this region so familiar to my boyhood is Woodbridge, on the Deben. Crabbe himself lived there for three of his early years, and later it was the home of two very unlike and unequally gifted men of letters, both of whom held the place and its neighbourhood in great affection. These were Bernard Barton and Edward FitzGerald, the one belonging to the generation of Southey and Lamb, the other to that of Tennyson and Thackeray. Bernard Barton, no East Anglian by blood but a Cumbrian, served nearly all his manhood as clerk in a Quaker bank at Woodbridge. Himself a Quaker, he was the embodiment of all that was amiable and cultured in that sect, and withal a personage of a singularly fine manly presence and genial conversation. He and Charles Lamb had met once or twice at the table of Taylor and Hessey the publishers, and from those meetings ensued a friendship carried on almost entirely by correspondence. It is as the "B.B." of Lamb's letters (one of them including his immortal rhapsody on a cold in the head) that Bernard Barton is now almost exclusively known to the general reader. But his volumes in their day ran through

several editions. For one selected and collected edition practically all the gentry in the county subscribed, and I find my father's name among the rest. But his work was valued far beyond local circles both for its own qualities of metrical fluency and simple, pious benignity of temper, and also as a mild and palatable antidote against the Byron fever of the hour. Lamb shared this view to the full. "I like them," he writes, "for what they are, and for what they are not. I have sickened on the modern rhodomontade and Byronism, and your plain Quakerish beauty has captivated me. It is all wholesome cates; aye, and toothsome too: and withal Quakerish." But elsewhere we find Lamb warning his friend candidly and shrewdly against some besetting foibles of his muse. "Religion is sometimes lugged in, as if it did not come naturally. You have also too much of singing metre, such as requires no deep ear to make; lilting measure; strike at less superficial melodies." These simple words of Lamb's leave little more that is to the purpose for criticism to say.

Bernard Barton's view and handling of the East-Suffolk countryside is as unlike Crabbe's as possible. His poetry is full of praises of the scenery of Woodbridge and its neighbouring villages. His descriptions, we may confess, are uncertain in colour and touch, and his verses are apt to weary the reader of to-day by their shallow fluency alike of thought and sound. I have already quoted one set, descriptive of the water-brook, the Lark, at Great Bealings. Here are two examples closely pertinent to our theme, and perhaps

as pleasant as his work will furnish. The first is on Landguard Fort, a solitary, not inconsiderable fortification of an old-fashioned kind built on the extremity of a shingle-spit at the mouth of the Ipswich river opposite Harwich. It was a haunt of Gainsborough's and the subject of his brush in early days, but the sentiment of the scene has been marred of late by the proximity of the railway station and new villa extensions of Felixstowe:—

> Along the sands, and by the sound
> Of ocean, moaning night and day,
> It stands: its lonely burial-ground
> Scattered with low stones, moss'd and grey,
> Whose brief inscriptions fade away
> Beneath the ocean-breeze's spell;
> And there, beneath the moon's pale ray,
> Still walks the nightly sentinel.

The above little piece has a real charm of conciseness and melody: next let us hear our poet when he apostrophizes his beloved river Deben:—

> No stately villas on thy side,
> May be reflected in thy tide;
>
> * * * * *
>
> No ruin'd abbey grey with years
> Upon thy marge its pile uprears;
> Nor crumbling castle, valour's hold,
> Recalls the feudal days of old,
> Nor dost thou need that such should be
> To make thee, Deben, dear to me;
> Thou hast thy own befitting charms
> Of quiet heath and fertile farms,

With here and there a copse to fling
Its welcome shade, where wild birds sing;
Thy meads for flocks and herds to graze;
Thy quays and docks, where seamen raise
Their anchor, and unfurl their sail
To woo and win the favouring gale.
And above all for me thou hast
Endearing memories of the past!

Well, Derwent and Yarrow, we must once more admit, have inspired more thrilling strains. Yet it is pleasant to share the idyllic meditations of our lettered Quaker, and to read of his genial ways and conversation, of his enjoyment and power of making others enjoy, "on some summer afternoon, perhaps at the little inn on the heath, or by the river-side, or when, after a pleasant picnic on the sea-shore, we drifted homeward up the river, while the breeze died away at sunset, and the heron, at last startled by our gliding boat, slowly rose from the ooze over which the tide was momentarily encroaching"—it is pleasant to read these things of Bernard Barton in the words of his younger friend and biographer already mentioned, Edward Fitz-Gerald.

That accomplished Cambridge scholar—scholar alike in classic and Oriental tongues—lived for the greater part of his life in the retirement of this same country-side. His singular intellectual temperament, in which originality and culture bore equal parts, found its best expression in verse translations which were in truth not so much translations as free and finished variations on the themes supplied by his text. By blood and

descent he was no Eastern Counties man, and indeed no Englishman, but pure Irish, his father having been a John Purcell married into a family of FitzGeralds whose name and arms he took after his father-in-law's death. These Purcells had owned large landed estates in various English counties, and through an unlucky mining speculation had lost them all except one at Boulge in East Suffolk. In my early days the head of the house was settled at Boulge Hall, some four miles from my home. Among other eccentricities this FitzGerald was a ranting evangelical out-of-door preacher, and in ways and dress and behaviour in general so abnormal as to pass among the neighbouring squires almost for a lunatic. Scarcely less eccentric was supposed to be his younger brother Edward. I have spoken of him as Barton's friend and biographer, not seeking to recall the nearer formal relationship in which they stood. After Barton's death Edward FitzGerald married his daughter, it is supposed from motives of generosity, as she was left ill off. But this was one of the actions of his life which earned for him his own name for himself, Ballyblunder. It was soon followed by a separation, and he resumed his former bachelor way of living. He lodged, we all knew, over Berry's the gunmaker's on the Market Hill in Woodbridge. By report we youngsters knew also, not without envy, of the sailing yacht he kept upon our neighbouring river the Deben. But of his being a writer and the friend and intimate correspondent of the most famous writers of his time, Carlyle, Tennyson, Thackeray, and the rest, we never

heard or dreamed. All we saw in him was an odd, tall, sad-faced, middle-aged or elderly gentleman wandering, say rather drifting, abstractedly about the country roads in an ill-fitting suit with a shabby hat pushed back on his head, blue spectacles on nose and an old cape cast anyhow about his shoulders. Few figures were more familiar to me by sight, few less regarded; and many a time must my pony's hoofs have bespattered this forlorn-looking figure as we cantered past him in the neighbouring lanes. Other distinguished personages belonging to or frequenting our country-side we had been duly taught to recognize and respect. There was Sir George Biddell Airy for one, the indefatigable and world-famous Cambridge mathematician and astronomer royal, who had built himself a little holiday home in the neighbouring village of Playford, to which his mother belonged (and where there had lately lived and died another no less celebrity of a different kind, Thomas Clarkson, the devoted leader of the campaign for the abolition of negro slavery). There was Sir William Page Wood for another, the brilliant lawyer, afterwards Lord Chancellor under the title of Lord Hatherley, who had spent his childhood in his grandfather's house at Woodbridge and was a constant visitor to a brother-in-law (beautiful old gentlemen to look at I justly thought them both) who held the living of the parish next our own, Great Bealings. But it never entered our thoughts that in after life, when these scientific or philanthropic or legal distinctions should have faded save in the memory of specialists, the brother of the crazy preaching squire

of Boulge would be famous with a growing fame through all the English-speaking world. All that world now knows how he spent his time translating—or shall we rather say transmuting—into English, in a manner all his own, many dramas from the Greek and Spanish, and diverse obscure poems from Eastern tongues, and how of all these versions there is one, his rendering of certain meditative staves of an old Persian astronomer-poet, which has been found to express most vitally and musically, most intimately, most hauntingly, that which is the ruling mood of our generation in face of the mystery of things and of their causes, the unsolved problems of human origin and destiny :—

> 'Up from Earth's Centre to the Seventh Gate
> I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn sate,
> And many a Knot unravelled by the Road,
> But not the Master-Knot of Human Fate.
>
> There was the Door to which I found no Key ;
> There was the Veil through which I might not see ;
> Some little talk awhile of ME and THEE
> There was—and then no more of THEE and ME.'

Needless to say, it is no matter of reproach to our parents or teachers that they did not open our eyes to the fact of this unrecognized genius living almost at our doors ; for in those days (I speak of about 1855–1865) FitzGerald had either not printed his translations, or printed them anonymously and so furtively that for all except his intimates they might as well not have been printed at all. The admiration of a select few, among them Rossetti and his group,

for his version of the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyám caused that one translation to be reprinted several times, each time with fresh and arbitrary variations, by the translator during his life but still without his name. It was not until towards 1890, some seven years after his death, that the posthumous issues of the poem began to get that hold upon the general reading public both in England and America which has since caused it to be reprinted in edition after edition too numerous to count, editions ranging from the simplest and cheapest to the most gorgeous, and has earned for its author the honour of at least two full-dress biographies, the last honour that he would have dreamed of or desired. What would he have said could he have lived to see that stage spectacle founded on his text which is the latest and surely the most fantastic development of the cult ?

CHAPTER II

JOHN RUSKIN

Some of the most vivid of my childish and boyish recollections are of John Ruskin, whose parents were friends of my parents and for whom my mother entertained an adoring regard, coupled, I think, with the ambition that I, her youngest, should grow up to be as nearly as might be such another. From very tender years I used to be taken from time to time to visit the Ruskins in their family abode on Denmark Hill. But from these earliest days I retain less recollection of the great man himself than of his mother. Stern old Calvinist as she was, and more than Spartan as had been her upbringing of her own son, she chose to make something of a pet of me. I have now before me a copy, with its shiny yellow boards all rubbed and dingy, of her son's tale for children, *The King of the Golden River*, with Richard Doyle's illustrations, which she gave me in 1852, when I was just short of seven years old, and which my governess helped me to adorn on the back of the frontispiece with a grateful inscription, set in an ornamental border of crimson lake and cobalt. A little later, I remember—at least I hope it was a little later—she used to regale me on each visit with a glass of fine sherry (the house of Ruskin, Telfer

and Domecq were great sherry merchants) and a slice of plum cake. It was not until my ninth year that I was taken with my two elder brothers expressly to see the great man himself and be admitted to his own room. He received us raw boys with extraordinary kindness, and one thing, I remember, instantaneously delighted us. This was a scene between him and his white Spitz terrier Wisie (I think there is mention of Wisie somewhere in *Praeterita*). The dog burst into the drawing-room just after we had arrived, and not having seen his master for some time leapt and capered and yelped and fumed about and over him as he sat, with a passion, almost a frenzy, of pent-up affection, and was caressed with little less eagerness in return. Ruskin then took us up to his working-room, and by way of giving us a practical drawing-lesson made before our eyes a sketch in body-colours of one corner of the room, with its curtain, wall-paper and furniture—all of them of a type which to the altered taste of the next generation would have seemed too Philistine and early Victorian to be endured. For very many years I had that sketch by me, but fear that in one or another of my various changes of domicile it has now got lost beyond recovery. During the next few years such visits and lessons were several times repeated. But the Turners on the walls and their owner's kind endeavours to interest me in them used still, I fear, to make less impression upon me than the slice of cake and glass of sherry with which the old lady never failed to regale me.

This for the first four or five years ; but before I was

fifteen I had become intensely sensitive both to the magnetism of Ruskin's personality and to the power and beauty of his writings. No man had about him more—few can ever have had so much—of the atmosphere and effluence of genius, and when he came into the room I used consciously to thrill to his presence. In those years, a little before and after the fortieth of his age, he was elegant after the fashion of his time as well as impressive in a fashion all his own. There remains with me quite unfaded the image of his slender, slightly stooping figure clad in the invariable dark blue frock coat and bright blue neck-tie; of his small head with its strongly marked features, its sweep of thick brown hair and closely trimmed side-whiskers; above all, of the singular bitter-sweet expression of his mouth (due partly, as I have always understood, to the vestiges of a scar left on the upper lip by a dog's bite in boyhood) and of the intense weight and penetration of his glance as he fixed his deep blue eyes upon yours from under the thick bushy prominence of his eyebrows (these were an inheritance from his father, who had them shaggier and longer than I have seen on any other man). The warmth and almost caressing courtesy of his welcome were as captivating as its manner was personal: in shaking hands he would raise the forearm from the elbow, which he kept close to his side, and bringing the hand down with a full sweep upon yours would hold you firmly clasped until greetings were over and talk, which generally turned immediately to teaching, began.

To such teaching, when it was addressed to myself, I could naturally, at my age, only listen in adoring acquiescence. But what I loved better still was to be allowed, as occasionally happened, to sit by while he let himself go in the company of some friend who could meet and draw him out on equal terms. It was not very often that I saw him, since my people spent the greater part of each year in our country home in Suffolk; but for two or three years he was hardly ever out of my thoughts except during the hours when they were quite engrossed by those rough outdoor sports of hare-hunting, pheasant-shooting, village cricket and the like, of which I have already spoken. The fifth volume of *Modern Painters*, which appeared when I was in my sixteenth year, was a gospel which for a while I pored over incessantly and held incomparable for insight and wisdom and eloquence; and by it I was led to an equally passionate study of the *Seven Lamps*, the *Stones of Venice*, and the rest of the early works on art. A queer freak of memory comes convincingly to remind me how strong must have been the prepossession. On a holiday trip in Ireland I remember walking after dinner in the moonlight on the shore of one of the Killarney Lakes in company with a grown-up guest at the same hotel, a middle-aged Admiralty clerk if I recollect aright; and to break a long and awkward silence said suddenly to him *à propos* of nothing, by way of a conversational opening which was bound to impress, "I know Ruskin."

But the phase of absolute devotion and unquestioning subservience did not last long. Being taken by

my father (again I think with an idea of following in Ruskinian footsteps) for several carriage tours on the Continent in the course of the next two or three years, I found myself, rather to my own dissatisfaction, beginning to see famous scenes and cities, buildings and pictures, no longer purely through the master's eyes but through my own. Later again, during my Cambridge years and afterwards, I seemed unwillingly to find, in those parts of his writings which I was able to check by my own studies, much misinterpretation of history, a habit of headlong and unquestioning but often quite unwarranted inference from the creations of art to the social conditions lying behind them, with much impassioned misreading of the relations of art in general to nature and to human life; everywhere the fire of genius, everywhere the same lovingly, piercingly intense observation of natural fact; everywhere the same nobleness of purpose and burning zeal for human welfare, the same beautiful felicity and persuasiveness of expression, the same almost unparalleled combination of utter sincerity with infinite rhetorical and dialectical adroitness and resource; but everywhere also the same dogmatic and prophetic conviction of being able to set the world right by his own individual insight and judgment on whatever matters might occupy his mind and heart, the same intolerant blindness to all facts and considerations that might tell against his theories, the same liability to intermingle passages of illuminating vision and wisdom with others of petulant, inconsistent, self-contradictory error and misjudgment. In short this demigod of my later boy-

hood, though still remaining an object of admiring affection and an inestimable source of stimulation and suggestion, came to count for me no longer as a leader and teacher to be followed except with reserve and critical after-thought.

These were not terms on which Ruskin much cared to be accepted, especially by one who had been brought as a child to sit at his feet; and after I had grown up and begun to work at the criticism and history of art, in my own plodding and uninspired way, as faithfully as I could, our meetings were rare and correspondence only occasional. Once, I remember, he was gravely hurt by some opinions I had expressed in one of the quarterly reviews in controversy with his own on the relation of art to morals. And when at twenty-eight I was appointed Slade Professor at Cambridge he again wrote expressing the hope that at any rate I should not make my tenure of the chair an opportunity for inculcating views in opposition to his teaching from the same chair at Oxford. Our terms of intercourse, when intercourse occurred, continued nevertheless to be those of old family friendship, and I never found that his personal presence, whether at public gatherings or in private intercourse, had lost its power to charm and thrill. One of the instances, I remember, when its effect was strongest upon me was at a lecture of his at the Royal Institution in which he had occasion to recite Scott's ballad of *Rosabelle*. The whole genius of the man, as all those who remember him will agree —his whole intensity of spiritual and imaginative being —used to throw itself into and enkindle his recitation

of poetry. His voice had a rare plangent and penetrating quality of its own, not shrill or effeminate and yet not wholly virile, which singularly enhanced the effect; that evening he was at his very best, and for those who heard him the "wondrous blaze" never, I am sure, gleamed on Roslin's castled rock and the groves of caverned Hawthornden so magically before or since.

There was perhaps somewhat less of genius and more of perversity in his behaviour one afternoon about the same time, when we were both staying at the Scotch country-house of a much-cherished and picture-loving mutual friend. A tea-picnic having been arranged at a special spot as the object of the party's afternoon walk, the master broke up the plan by tacitly but firmly insisting on walking off and casting about on a quest of his own in a different direction. A daughter of the house who dutifully attended him remembers that the object of his search was an old stone-breaker at work beside the road. He was always fond of getting into talks with stone-breakers and watching their work on the chance of its yielding some interesting mineral find. To this particular old stone-breaker he promised, after several talks, to send a book on stones and minerals, and when the old man answered that it would be no use because he could not read, Ruskin took him at once into warmer favour than ever. During the same visit, I remember, his talk was at its best and most illuminating in praise of three things in our host's collection, an early Rossetti, an early Millais, and a drawing by Burne-Jones; and the

substance of the said talk, being afterwards set down, turned into the essay on *The Three Colours of Prae-Raphaelitism.* One of the happiest later encounters that I remember was at the house of the same Burne-Jones, his all but equal in genius and charm. This was during one of the not infrequent intervals when he used to be at the height of his powers again between two of the fits of mental breakdown to which he had become subject after 1879. When two such men were pouring out for each other the riches of their minds and hearts, any third who had the luck to be of the company could do nothing but listen silently and be grateful. Later again, at the beginning of 1888, when he was an aged and bearded, changed and saddened man, I found him simply courteous and businesslike, though on the eve, as it turned out, of one of his longest and most grievous mental disturbances, when I had the opportunity of arranging with him the purchase for the British Museum of a precious volume of early Italian drawings of the history of the world, by means of which I was by-and-by enabled to solve (at least in my own opinion) one of the obscurest problems of fifteenth century art and to recreate the hitherto semi-mythic personality of the father of Italian engraving, Maso Finiguerra.

All the world knows how by degrees and with advancing years the passion in Ruskin for opening the eyes and awakening the consciences of his fellow-creatures not only grew more intense, but extended itself to every sphere of human conduct and activity, of existence both social and individual; and how he, in

private intercourse the sweetest and most deferentially courteous, the most playfully engaging and lovable of men, became in public an Ezekiel not to be appeased or silenced, an embittered denouncer of all the institutions, all the practices and traditions, of industry and commerce, of exchange, distribution and class organization on which the social fabric has in every modern community been founded; and not only of these, but of almost all the methods of study and research by which the modern mind has striven to investigate the truths of nature and turn to account the material laws of things. Of the truth and value of these tremendous prophetic and denunciatory labours I felt myself no more able to judge than any average person who accepts because he must the social order under which he lives, and holds that the general lot of man can only be gradually amended by the collective good-will and long-sustained efforts of many generations. The path of any solitary world-reformer, however impressively, however gloriously, gifted, who would suddenly refashion the inherited social complex and transform the customs, standards, and desires of man by the efforts of his single genius must lead, it would seem, inevitably to madness, and his efforts to tragic failure. Tragic to the direst uttermost would Ruskin himself assuredly have deemed his failure could he have lived to see the events and tendencies of the last few years: the mutual rage of slaughter and destruction between nations, the devastated fields and defaced cathedrals of his beloved France; the cleavage, estrangement, and suspicion subsisting unabated between rich and poor;

and in the sphere of art, to name one symptom only, the fury of civic vulgarization which in our would-be grandest thoroughfares has sacrificed all sense and style and fitness to the demon of advertisement, giving to the most massive of architectural piles unmitigatedly absurd and garish, unstructural ground-floor frontages all of glass, the most fragile of things. But sad as was in his latter years the personal destiny of Ruskin, and futile the apparent temporary issue of his toil, the English-speaking race has just been unanimously remembering the hundredth anniversary of his birth as though it had been that of an acknowledged world-benefactor. And for the time being it looks as though his labours toward social regeneration were coming to be regarded by many as the true benefaction, while his views on the fine arts and the relations of art to life and nature have lost much of the influence they had. Posterity alone, and that not an early posterity, will have had experience enough to assess the relative values of his multifarious endeavours. For myself, I can but bear my insignificant witness to the debt I owe both to his personality and his genius, and to the spell which in early youth they exercised upon me. Better than to be taught how to see, and what to think and feel, is to be so aroused that one is forced to see, think, and feel for oneself: and that is what the work of Ruskin did for thousands of us who would never label ourselves his disciples.

CHAPTER III

EDWARD BURNE-JONES

The next great admiration of my life after Ruskin was for Burne-Jones, and this (seeing that he was only twelve years my senior) was not of the same distantly adoring strain as my boyish cult of Ruskin had been, but of a kind much more equal and companionable. Enthusiasm for his work had made me seek his acquaintance even before I had taken my degree at Cambridge, that is some time in 1886–7, and the charm of his personality completed what love for his painting had begun. As soon as I came to London and took up journalism—principally as art critic on the *Pall Mall Gazette* in its early days under the fighting editorship of Frederick Greenwood—I began to lay about me on his behalf against the dunder-headed majority of critics, for such I held them, who belittled or derided his gift. He himself was from the first too much absorbed in his creative tasks to concern himself much about criticism whether hostile or friendly; and fortunately he had from the first had friends and backers whose appreciation saved him from any serious danger of the wolf at the door: Rossetti foremost, then fellow-artists and craftsmen like Morris, Birket Foster, Arthur Hughes; very soon

afterwards Ruskin; and before long, wealthy collectors like Mr. W. Graham and Mr. Leyland. But in my own early life both the zest of public battle on his behalf, and the pleasure of being often with him in such spare hours as he could afford his friends of an evening or on Sunday, counted for very much.

In the then state of English painting, the appeal, which is the special business of that art, to the sense of visible beauty or significance in things, to that faculty which perceives and insists on the harmonious, the suggestive and striking relations and combinations of forms and colours in the world, was made almost exclusively in the representation of remote or romantic subjects. There were one or two exceptional and finely gifted men, like George Mason and Frederick Walker, who brought the instinct of design and the paramount aim at pictorial value and effect into their treatment of scenes of actual life and nature. But from the average popular art depicting scenes and figures of ordinary life the attempt to appeal to such sense had almost entirely passed away, and people had got used to looking at pictures not for any truly pictorial value they might possess, but simply for the sake of the story they more or less expressively told or the scenery they more or less accurately reproduced. The result was a kind of shallow reflection of obvious aspects of life and nature, leaving out all the characters which more finely attuned senses could discern in daily things or a more active power of selection and arrangement impose on them. The half-century from

then till now has happily made a vital difference for the better in the quality of every-day art. Almost any exhibition of to-day will show plenty of work bringing out and turning to true, unforced pictorial account the latent impressiveness and suggestiveness for the eye residing in every common sight that nature or man's toil provides, were it only the chimneys of a group of factories against the sky, or the iron framework of some new building with its cranes and girders, or the clashing chaos of coloured advertisements on a street hoarding. So also in portraiture, instead of the arbitrary imposition on a sitter of some accepted and more or less abstract type of feature or expression, any current exhibition will show a search for and insistence on something characteristic which is really there, and which by sensitiveness of seeing and rendering can be made to yield a result human and pictorial in one.

In the days of which I speak, half a century or more ago, almost the only kind of painting in England which possessed true pictorial quality and made its appeal specifically to and through the eye was, as I have said, and paradox as the statement may sound, the painting which called up and visualized not every-day appearances of life and nature but themes of poetry and imagination. The stimulus of such themes moved a certain class of artists to the effort, not to "illustrate" them in any commonplace sense of the word, but to create a corresponding world of forms and colours, "visions and dreams and symbols," making to the ocular sense a parallel appeal to that which the

themes themselves made to the literary sense and imagination. To this kind of painting it was the masterful spirit of Rossetti which gave the dominant impulse, although of the two arts which he himself practised he was more really accomplished in verse than with the brush. It was Rossetti who had ordered Burne-Jones (his advice to his friends was always virtually an order) to attack at twenty-two the practice of imaginative and poetic painting without any of the usual preliminary training of hand and eye. From this first impulsion, or compulsion, and from study of the earlier painters of Italy together, Burne-Jones drew the impetus which, working in his own intense and intensely personal artistic temperament, carried him on, after a few trying years of derision and neglect, through a full career of passionately strenuous labour to ultimate recognized success. I have neither the space nor the purpose here to discuss the quality of his life's rich output of imaginative and decorative work: hardly even to glance at the kind of attack nowadays sometimes directed against it from a new point of view, by those who declare that painting must appeal to the eye and the visual emotions only and stop there—that any sign of mind or meaning behind the visual effect is a positive blot on a picture and makes of it "literature in two dimensions" and the like. Stuff and nonsense! Of course—and it should need no saying—the primary and essential appeal of every picture must needs be to the eye, by its harmonies and rhythms of line and colour, its balancings and massings and proportions and contrasts of light

and shade, and by their direct effect upon the visual emotions. If such appeal and such effect are not forthcoming, or if they fail, the picture is naught; but if they succeed and the picture is a picture indeed, then the more of mind that can be felt behind it, the richer the associations and suggestions it conveys, the better.

Full as are the gifts of mind to be discerned behind Burne-Jones' work, rich as are the imaginative associations it calls up, it represents only a part of the wealth and colour of his being. For one thing, notwithstanding all its beauty, its felicity and inexhaustible original invention in colour and linear design, as far as concerns the human types it depicts it is in the main of a melancholy cast. Hostile critics used to be continually harping on the fact that to nearly all his figures, whether designed singly or in groups, in repose or in action, he was prone to give looks of wistful, unsatisfied longing, sad eyes and mouths, a pining droop or yearning out-thrust of the head from the shoulders. Let it be granted: such was in truth the prevailing instinctive and involuntary cast of his imagination. And why not? Must not every artist whose work comes from any depth of soul be governed by his own personal cast of imagination—just as, to take two instances far removed in time as in kind, Botticelli and J. F. Millet were governed respectively by theirs? And is the world we live in, and is the heart of man, so made that in the depths of any great man's soul there is not likely to reside an instinct of yearning and craving, not likely to be harboured a passion of unsatis-

fied spiritual quest and hunger? Such a strain of innermost, still hankering soul-hunger, such a vital habit of the being, truly lay deep in Burne-Jones's nature and could not help expressing itself in his work. But in his human and social relations other strains in him prevailed, partly, perhaps, because he chose that prevail they should. "Never at any time in his life," writes with perfect truth his widow, "did his ordinary manner betray to others the sadness to which, in common with all sensitive natures, he was subject. This was, I believe, owing to a principle which I find formulated in one of his letters: 'I hold it a point of honour with every gentleman to conceal himself, and make a fair show before people, to ease life for every one,'—and partly to the cheerful effect which companionship always had upon him." At all events in company he charmed no less by a rich laughter-loving gaiety than by his surprising range of knowledge and attainment and the ease and beauty and simplicity of language with which he brought them to bear in conversation.

Born amidst relatively straitened surroundings at Birmingham, Burne-Jones had from boyhood found means to be a devourer of books, and at Oxford and afterwards had received from the brotherly companionship of William Morris a continually renewed stimulus and sympathy in the studies they both loved. His mind was in one sense the fullest—and that was in its range over and grasp of the imaginative literatures of the world—that I have known. Vast as was his life's output in his own art, and tied as he was to the easel

every day and almost all day, that he should have found time for so much reading seemed a miracle. Ancient classic literature, the whole range of mediæval legend sacred and profane, Celtic legend and poetry, Scandinavian legend and poetry, the poetry and romance of Persia and the East, the history and fabled or recorded aspect of all the storied cities of the world, he seemed to possess them all, not as dry learning, but as living matter of brooding thought and delighted imagination. Whatever new thing one might have chanced to learn within this range of such subjects, one always found that he had known it long ago and better. According to the occasion he could expatiate on any such matter in an abounding vein of eloquence, always classically pure and simple, or sum up the gist of what he had to say in two or three pithy words. Among his letters to me I find one hitherto unpublished which will give the reader a more vivid impression of his mind and manner in relation to such studies than any words of mine could give. I had little knowledge of Celtic legendary lore or of its sources, and had been reading as something new to me the great national Irish legend of Deirdre and Cuchulain ("The Sons of Usnach") as turned into modern poetry in Aubrey de Vere's volume of 1882. I had some personal acquaintance with that very lovable and accomplished, then ageing Irish gentleman and poet, who in his youth had enjoyed the friendship of Wordsworth and was the life-long intimate of John Henry Newman, Henry Taylor, and the Cambridge group which included Tennyson and Monckton Milnes. There was truly more of culture

and charm than of fire and inspiration in his verse.* Nevertheless I had greatly enjoyed the reading, and wrote as much to Burne-Jones from a house in the Isle of Skye, overlooking the Sound of Sleat, where I was staying with his friends and mine the William Grahams. This is his answer, written from the summer quarters at Rottingdean which he had lately secured for himself and his family: the date is some time in 1882 or 1883.

ROTTINGDEAN.

MY DEAR S. C.—

If I write red hot from your letter it will be best—else I know what will happen—I was so glad to hear from you and about

* Here are three stanzas by way of specimen for those who do not know his work.

But Deirdrè at the grave-head stood alone,
The surging crowd held back by holy dread;
Her face was white as monumental stone;
Her hands, her garb, from throat to foot were red
With blood—their blood. Standing on life's dark verge
She scorned to die till she had sung their dirge.

'Dead are the eagles three of Culan's peaks;
The lions three of Uladh's forest glades;
The wonders three of Alba's lakes and creeks;
The loved ones three of Etive's fair young maids:
The crownless sons of Erin's Throne are sped:
The glories of the Red Branch Order dead.

'Is there who dreams that, now my Naisi's breath
Is stilled, his wife will tarry from his side?
Thou man that mak'st far down yon cave of death,
Be sure thou dig it deep, and dig it wide!
There lie the Brothers Three! 'Tis just, 'tis meet
Their Sister take her place before their feet.'

friends too—who are out somewhere on the map. I once looked on the map for them, but fled in despair—there seemed to be floating islands and one very very far off was Skye—I know they are beautiful, I know all about them—I have travelled everywhere—seen all places—but my home is Florence where Giotto lived—nothing can lure me or charm me away.

Aubrey de Vere sent me his book (woe is me I haven't acknowledged it) he does love the stories but I can't read them except in their first barbaric shape—they can't be done by any one—but he does really love and know all about them and is a bard with a harp, but not the harp that once . . .

I do nothing—I can't—the clockwork in my head went wrong and buzzed and I can't wind it up again yet—I shall stay here till the end of the month at least. I am brown and spotted and red and fat and bald and drowsy—drowsy always—but not sleeping well for all that.

R. Dean is the noisiest city in the world—from 2 in the morning when the earliest cock begins till 10 at night when the last yelling baby is put to bed it is one pandemonium of noise—but out on the downs it is peace like at the beginning of time.

Your aff.

Ned.

Modern imaginative literature of the best kind Burne-Jones possessed in a scarcely less degree than ancient, at least so much of it as is to be read in English; his two chief favourites being (as they are the favourites of every wise reader) Walter Scott and Dickens. As the books of Louis Stevenson came out successively he gave them a place in his affection next almost to these.

I find the following letter written soon after the first publication of the *Child's Garden of Verses* in 1885 and going into the question of a possible illustrated edition:

also recording his first and I think only personal meeting with R. L. S. :—

The Grange,
West Kensington, W.

My dear S. C.,—

I can't think who should be The one. Crane only occurs to me. All his fancies would be pretty and full of a hundred inventions. I wish I had time to have a try at it—but it is no use to think of that, for my days are full to the brim—still I keep thinking over the matter and still Crane comes uppermost in my mind, his Grimm was lovely, and he is now so experienced in making them colour his designs properly that it seems a pity not to apply there, where at least there is certainty of excellence, and a chance of something better—it is a heavenly book—we haven't a Richter, never have had one and it's a pity.

Would it be useless to ask Leighton ? He draws babies with real rapture and it would cost him little trouble—but no one is like Crane for designing borders and making ornaments, and he would festoon the book divinely if he were in a good mood.

Your aff. Ned.

It was a lovely evening with L. S. and I loved him. I wish he was fat and well and like a bull and lived here.

" Have you read Catriona ? " he exclaims, in a letter written soon after the appearance of the book, some eight years later,—

You didn't tell me, and if you had you must have talked of it, for it is a wonder, and every page glitters, and I can't make out why the Speaker doesn't read it to the House of an evening —much better for them to listen to it than to each other's nonsense. I am right glad he has made a woman at last, and why did he delay ? this one is so beautifully made. Oh, he's a miracle of a lad, that boy out there in the Cannibal Islands ; I wish he would come back and write only about the Borderland.

In Dickens what Burne-Jones loved especially were the parts most riotously comic. I can see and hear him now shouting with laughter as he echoed the choicer utterances of Sam Weller or Micawber or Mrs. Gamp, his head flung back and beard in the air (in early days it was the fine forked and flowing red-brown beard depicted in Watts's well-known portrait, but later, one grizzled or grizzling and shorter trimmed). And he was very capable of original Dickens-like observations and inventions of his own. No one had a quicker or more healthily amused sense, without sting or ill-nature, of the grotesque and the absurd in ordinary life. No one loved better to make or had a better gift for making, by speech or pencil, happy fun and laughter with his children and grand-children. In these last he took in his later years an especial delight, and loved not only to draw but to show off to his friends the sturdiness and dimpled fatness of their infant limbs. Let those who desire to form a just idea of him begin by realizing, if they can, not only his constant and most winning sweetness and affectionateness of accost, and a certain indefinable note of innate distinction—something more finely bred than can be imparted by mere breeding —in all that he did and said and was, but also the love of and capacity for jolly mirth and caricature which subsisted along with the more wistful, brooding and craving elements in his nature. He could be delighted on occasion with any extravagance of melodrama, and it was a sight to see him hunch his shoulders up to his ears and glower as he repeated in hollow tones from a once popular stage-play the appalling

query, "Did you ever see the Danites?" All these attractive and attaching personal qualities naturally drew in his later years a widening circle about him, and he became a celebrity socially sought after and well known. But he never allowed social calls to bring about a day's relaxation of his industry or the smallest abandonment of his ideals. To none of his old friends, of course, did the slightest change ensue from the honours which were almost thrust upon him and which both for his art's and for his children's sake he thought it right to accept. When his oldest and closest friend of all, William Morris, with whom he had worked and thought and felt all their lives in the closest brotherly association, threw himself headlong into the cause of socialism, Burne-Jones would not follow him, holding that an artist's first and paramount duty was to his art, and knowing that in his own case at least the artist's life and the politician's or agitator's were physically as well as morally incompatible. But this partial sundering of their ways did not bring about the least jar or breach of friendship between the two. For myself, I retain no memories of him that are not entirely endearing.

CHAPTER IV

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

Looking back lately through volumes of the *Westminster Review* some half a century old, I found under the date January 1871 an essay near thirty pages long enthusiastically quoting and praising the poetical writings, both translated and original, of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Recognizing the essay for my own, I was freshly reminded of the fascinated admiration which possessed me in those days, youngster as I was, for the poet-painter and his work. By the time I left Cambridge I already took intense pleasure in some of his early paintings which I knew in the houses of friends; and I held (as I still hold) his renderings from the early Italian poets, first published in the volume of 1861, to be unmatched among feats of verse translation for graceful, unforced fidelity to the spirit and even in most cases to the letter of the originals. Drawn moreover by the glamour which invested Rossetti's personality as the main inspiring focus and source of impulse whence had sprung all I most cared for—that is whatever is most imaginative and impassioned—in the English art of the time, I asked Burne-Jones to take me to him; was kindly received; and saw much of him throughout the years 1868–1872,

which were somewhat critical and fateful years of his life.

I had come into his circle of course too late, and with the Cambridge stamp and direction too definitely impressed upon me, to undergo the full dominating force of his influence such as it had been exercised some dozen years earlier, when he suddenly determined the careers of men like Burne-Jones and William Morris, or earlier yet when along with Holman Hunt and Millais he was a leading spirit in the original Præ-Raphaelite movement. The best days of his life were indeed already over. Since the tragic death of his wife his passionately craving and brooding nature had been gradually losing command over itself. He had let himself live with growing recklessness, and having begun to suffer from habitual insomnia, was falling into the chloral habit by way of remedy. Everything was preparing in him for a constitutional breakdown: but even to intimates such preparation was as yet scarcely apparent, and to a newcomer such as I was alike the man himself and his surroundings and way of life were irresistibly, if somewhat weirdly, impressive.

About the surroundings and the way of life so much has been written that I shall pass them over quickly. The handsome old red-brick house in a row looking on the Chelsea reach of the Thames; the combined gloom and richness of its decorations, the sombre hangings, the doors and panellings painted in sombre dark-green sparsely picked out with red and lighted here and there by a round convex mirror; the shelves

and cupboards laden with brassware and old blue Nankin china (in the passion for collecting which Rossetti was, if I remember rightly, an absolute pioneer); the long green and shady garden at the back, with its uncanny menagerie of wombat, raccoon, armadillo, kangaroo, or whatever might be the special pet or pets of the moment; the wilful, unconventional, unhealthy habits and hours; the rare and reluctant admission of strangers; all these things have already been made familiar by repeated descriptions to such readers as are curious about them. So have the aspect and bearing of the man himself; his sturdy, almost burly figure clad in a dark cloth suit with the square jacket cut extra long and deep-pocketed; his rich brown hair and lighter brown, shortish, square-trimmed beard, the olive complexion betraying Italian blood; the handsome features between spare and fleshy, with full, sensual underlip and thoughtful, commanding forehead in which some of his friends found a likeness to Shakespeare; the deep bar above the nose and fine blue-grey colour of the eyes behind their spectacles; and finally, the round, John-Bullish, bluntly cordial manner of speech, with a preference for brief and bluff slang words and phrases which seemed scarce in keeping with the fame and character of the man as the most quintessentially, romantically poetic of painters and writers.

During the years of our intercourse it was Rossetti's poetry more than his painting that interested and impressed me. His earlier water-colours, those of the Dante cycle especially, comparatively unambitious

in scale and technic as they were, seemed to me (and still seem) to give by their fine new inventive colour-harmonies, their passionate intensities of expression and their rare originality and often, though not always, their beauty of group-composition and pattern, a more satisfying idea of his genius for painting than his ambitious oil pictures on the scale of life. It was at these latter that he had been principally working, from Mrs. William Morris, Miss Marie Spartali, Miss Wilding, and one or two other favourite sitters, for some time before I knew him. Single figures among them, looking straight out of the frame—a Pandora, a Sibylla Palmifera, a Venus Verticordia—possessed indeed a fine inventive gorgeousness of colour and an impressive mystical voluptuousness, or voluptuous mysticism, of their own. But for figures on the life scale in less simple attitudes, or for combinations of them, his powers of design and execution seemed never fully adequate, and a certain unpleasant streakiness in the handling of the oil medium, with certain exaggerations and mannerisms in the drawing of lips, throats, and other features made that long and sumptuous series of his later embodiments of the eternal feminine to my mind less and less admirable as time went on.

But Rossetti's poetry, both by its own power and by the manner in which I learned to know it, for the time being enthralled me completely. The story is well-known how, in a passion of grief and remorsefulness at the time of his wife's death, he had buried the original bundle of his manuscript poems with her, laying it in her coffin among the rich strands of her

red-gold hair. Of a few of these buried poems he had drafts or copies by him, and would sometimes, when I first knew him, read out from them to a small circle of his intimates. With one consent these used to urge him to have the whole packet of the poems exhumed for publication, and I on my part joined eagerly in the plea. At last he yielded, and the necessary legal permission having been obtained the exhumation was carried out under the eye of Rossetti's friend and factotum of the hour, Charles Augustus Howell. (A digression concerning this brilliantly plausible, capable, and entertaining, totally unscrupulous and untrustworthy Anglo-Portuguese intriguer, the satellite in these years first of Ruskin and afterwards of Rossetti, would in this place be tempting but must be forborne; the more so as his history, far liker fiction than real life as it was, has been fully set out by another hand.)*

The manuscript poems having been rescued, and the question of their publication having next to be considered, Rossetti used on many evenings to read out from them to a few invited guests after dinner. He was good enough to care, or seem to care, somewhat specially for my opinion, and consulted me, both verbally and in many letters which I have lately re-read, about the revision of the poems and the order in which they should stand in the proposed volume, in the end adopting most of my suggestions.

But the readings themselves were among the marking events, and remain among the golden memories, of my life. Most of the poets I have known have had

* See *Murray Marks and his Friends, by G. C. Williamson* (John Lane).

their own special way of reading, and it was generally interesting or impressive to hear. Rossetti's way was not dramatic in any ordinary sense of the word. It was rather a chant, a monotone; but somehow he was able with little variation of pitch or inflection to express a surprising range and richness of emotion. His voice was magical in its mellow beauty of *timbre* and quality and in its power to convey the sense of a whole world of brooding passion and mystery, both human and elemental, behind the words. A kind of sustained musical drone or hum with which he used to dwell on and stress and prolong the rhyme-words and sound-echoes had a profound effect in stirring the senses and souls of his hearers. There are certain poems or passages of poems, the fierce visionary and imprecatory stanzas of *Sister Helen*—the "rose shut in a book" couplets from *Jenny*—above all, perhaps the sad, slow-trailing cadences of the lyric, *A Little While*—

> A little while a little love
> The hour yet bears for thee and me,
> Who have not drawn the veil to see
> If still our heaven be lit above.
>
> Thou merely, at the day's last sigh,
> Hast felt thy soul prolong the tone;
> And I have heard the night-wind cry,
> And deemed its speech mine own,—

there are poems and passages, I say, like these which still haunt my ear, and will haunt it to the end, exactly as they were sounded from the poet's lips on those evenings half a century ago. Heard and judged for

the first time under these conditions, the poetry of Rossetti naturally impressed me profoundly, and moved me to a higher pitch of critical admiration than I should have felt—though the pitch would still have been high—had I known them for the first time in print.

Moreover it was an hour when lovers of poetry were rather specially hungry and thirsty for something that should satisfy their appetite for poetic passion and romance. Tennyson, at the height of his fame and power, had just published the first volume of his *Idylls of the King*. After *In Memoriam* and *Maud* these Arthurian idylls had been to many of us a grievous disappointment. In spite of their sustained and subtle filagree finish of execution and many exquisite passages, we felt that they were but tame drawing-room versions of the great Arthur legends, versions into which the taint of the Victorian age and of Victorian ethics and ideals and constraints and politenesses had passed with paralysing effect. And we found ourselves all the more thrilled and satisfied by the full-blooded splendour and passionate colouring and imagery of Rossetti's work. On the appearance of the volume Swinburne instantly wrote glorifying it in his most excited vein of critical panegyric. And for what my own help might be worth, I rushed to review and praise it in as many quarters as were open to me. Will it at all interest the reader of to-day to see, by some specimens from my *Westminster Review* article aforesaid, the kind of welcome which Rossetti's poems got from a raw but sincere youngster familiar with

his translations from the Italian and in love with the kind of imagery which came natural to him as painter and poet in one? After trying to make clear the way in which his special strain of imagination resembled that of the early Italian poets in that it instinctively invests with human and personified shape every passion and experience of the soul, and how in this kind of poetry the mystical and the pictorial tendencies work together :—

The subtle passages of overburdened consciousness (I go on to say), the inner and fugitive experiences of the spirit, to be expressed, as here, in terms of material imagery, demand that the figures of that imagery should undergo conditions, movements, transformations of too fleeting and too vague a kind to bear complete mental realization: this is consonant with the mystical tendency, while on the other hand it is consonant with the pictorial tendency to endow its concrete figures with a reality so vivid, and attributes so visible, that the mind cannot avoid their complete realization; and hence, endeavouring to follow them through all their vicissitudes, is apt to feel thrown out when these elude the conditions of material possibility. This, we think, may be a difficulty to arrest the reader at a sonnet like that headed "He and I"; or to make his full enjoyment of the wonderful four headed "Willowwood" a matter of time and familiarity; or to leave something still wanting from the perfection of the following, called "Stillborn Love," so admirable in its structure and diction, so striking for its heat and volume of passion, so pregnant and pathetic with its suggestion of immortal amends for the frustration of to-day :—

> The hour which might have been but could not be,
> Which man's and woman's heart conceived and bore,
> Yet whereof life was barren, on what shore
> Bides it the breaking of Time's weary sea?

Bondchild of all consummate joys set free,
It somewhere sighs and serves, and mute before
The house of Love, hears thro' the echoing door
His hours elect in choral consonancy.

But lo! what wedded souls now hand in hand
Together tread at last the immortal strand
With eyes where burning memory lights love home?
Lo! how the little outcast hour has turned
And leapt to them and in their faces yearned:—
"I am your child: O parents, ye have come!"

Turn to the pair of sonnets called, "Newborn Death," in which the embodied personages of Life, Love, Art, Death, Song, float before us in lineaments of such new and moving loveliness as belong to the very rarest region of the imagination; or to any of the love-sonnets, such as those headed "Lovesight," "Winged Hours," "Life-in-Love," "Parted Love," "Broken Music," "The One Hope," which in the fulness and richness of their imagery seem to give the most fitting and harmonious as well as the most adorned expression to phases of feeling themselves too full and rich for simple utterance; phases which lie between joy and grief, and are more complex and involved than either; in which feeling does not absorb or exclude thought, but informs and inflames it for prospect and retrospect as well as for the passion or the presentations of the moment; so that the buoyancy of delight is clogged with the recollection of its delay, the impetuosity of rapture checked with the wistfulness of apprehension or chilled with the shadow of foreboding; the bitterness of loss involved with the reminiscence of triumph or the augury of reparation; pain and pleasure for ever interwoven, and each shot through with the consciousness, the presentiment, the possibility of the other.

. . . The fragmentary *House of Life*, besides its fifty sonnets, contains also some highly-finished pieces of different lyric form; most of these too dealing with the fatalities or forebodings of thwarted passion. The three melancholy and searching stanzas of the song called "A Little While," are quite admirable for their

careful concentration, as well as for the reluctant *andante* of their metrical movement; while, by way of contrast, the succeeding "Song of the Bower" storms with sonorous anapæsts in full charge, and tells out the dire constraint of separation in tones only a little weakened (as it seems to us) by something of commonplace in the imagery and language of verses two and three. But there is no poem of this division better done, or more answering to inward experiences, than one having nothing to do with love, but casting into new articulateness a phase of that vague commerce with eternal things of which from time to time a man is conscious, when one or another of the large dealings of nature laying hold upon him seems to loosen the sensuous bands of the spirit, and lift it abroad into the knowledge of some divine environment, some uncomprehended unity of natural with human and spiritual with bodily things. The suggestion comes in this case through the avenue of hearing:—

Listen alone beside the sea,
  Listen alone among the woods;
  Those voices of twin solitudes
Shall have one sound alike to thee;
  Hark, where the murmurs of thronged men
  Surge and sink back and surge again—
Still the one voice of wave and tree.

Gather a shell from the strown beach
  And listen at its lips: they sigh
  The same desire and mystery,
The echo of the whole sea's speech.
  And all mankind is thus at heart
  Not anything but what thou art:
And earth, sea, man, are all in each.

. . . Turning to those contents of the volume which do not belong to the *House of Life*, a poem of things near at hand and of yesterday—and of to-day and (alas!) to-morrow also—is that called "Jenny." A monologue suggested by the sight and presence of a sleeping harlot was a thing from which the English muse might have been held bound to shrink. But the manner of its treatment

here is such as to have given offence, so far as we know, to no reader or critic—a manner perfectly direct, but perfectly free from evil enjoyment. What the poem does is to set forth, with poetical intensity and ornament, such a chain of thoughts as might present itself to any man of scholarship and imagination, and of a certain vivacity of the conscience, under the circumstances. Such thoughts would naturally be full, as these are full, with the burden of all that evil which presses itself upon some minds as a thing that cannot be cured, upon others, as one that must not be endured—of the curses and contrasts of civilization, and the mysterious confines of good and evil. The fairest thing to do is to quote at length that portion of the poem which contains its two leading and most elaborate images, the imaginative beauty and force of which will come home to every reader, as well as the technical art which has thrown into the eight-syllable metre so much of varied and involved sweetness, and led up to the concluding passage in such culminant and portentous thunder :—

> . . . If but a woman's heart might see
> Such erring heart unerringly
> For once ! But that can never be.
> Like a rose shut in a book,
> In which pure women may not look ;
> For its base pages claim control
> To crush the flower within the soul ;
> Where through each dead rose-leaf that clings,
> Pale as transparent Psyche-wings,
> To the vile text, are traced such things
> As might make lady's cheek indeed
> More than a living rose to read ;
> So nought save foolish foulness may
> Watch with hard eyes the sure decay ;
> And so the life-blood of this rose,
> Puddled with shameful knowledge, flows
> Through leaves no chaste hand may unclose :
> Yet still it keeps such faded show

Of when 'twas gathered long ago,
That the crushed petals' lovely grain,
The sweetness of the sanguine stain,
Seen of a woman's eyes, must make
Her pitiful heart, so prone to ache,
Love roses better for its sake :—
Only that this can never be :—
Even so unto her sex is she.

. . . Like a toad within a stone
Seated while Time crumbles on ;
Which sits there since the earth was curs'd
For man's transgression at the first ;
Which, living through all centuries,
Not once has seen the sun arise ;
Whose life, to its cold circle charmed,
The earth's whole summers have not warmed ;
Which always—whitherso the stone
Be flung—sits there, deaf, blind alone ;—
Aye, and shall not be driven out
Till that which shuts him around about
Break at the very master's stroke,
And the dust thereof vanish as smoke,
And the seed of man vanish as dust :—
Even so within this world is Lust.

. . . What any poet is going to be for another generation, it is not given to his contemporaries to tell. But what Mr. Rossetti in his own generation is may be put on record ; and that is, the poet of personal passion—for all such as know or can sympathize with personal passion in a shape in which, being most paramount and engrossing, it is yet not most direct or most alone, but in which it takes up and carries along with it all collateral elements of the being—and the more modern, the more highly organized and endowed the being, the more complex and manifold these elements will be—re-awakening and illuminating all forms, all pressures past, adding intensity to existence, charging and complicating the consciousness with images from far and near.

Rossetti had little or none of Burne-Jones's fine self-sufficient indifference to criticism. It is not true, as has been said, that he took undignified pains to ensure that reviews should be favourable. Swinburne of course for one, and I for another, were absolutely unsolicited volunteers in the cause. But when there appeared the late Robert Buchanan's preposterous attack upon him, at first pseudonymous and then unveiled, in the pamphlet called *The Fleshly School of Poetry*, he was both agitated and angered beyond measure. In this matter again I did my best, together with a group of other ardent friends and admirers, and this time by the master's desire and request, to stand by him and make things as hot for his assailant as we could. At the same time I succeeded in dissuading him—I had forgotten the fact, but am reminded of it by his brother's biography—from printing a satiric effort of his own against the enemy which struck us as neither dignified nor effective.

I have scarcely left space to speak of the humorous, burlesque-loving elements which subsisted in Rossetti's nature alongside of the darkly passionate and mystical elements. They were somewhat singular in their kind and were often exercised frankly and light-heartedly at the expense of those about him. In writing they showed themselves chiefly in the composition of "Limericks" on the characters of his friends. He was, at any rate while his days of tolerable health lasted, in practice a model of good friendship, somewhat masterful and domineering, it is true, among those of his inner circle, but infinitely generous withal both in

word and act, loving to praise whatever he saw worthy of praise in any one's work, prompt and eager to help any one in difficulties with money or whatever form of service might be most needed—in a word, essentially *bon prince*. But at the same time he had the shrewdest eye for his friends' faults or failings, and the neatest possible knack in exposing such faults or failings in rhymes which he was apt to troll out with gusto in their hearing and never expected them to resent. For instance, he had gladly and often taken in and housed a certain prae-Raphaelite landscape-painter called Inchbold. The recipient of this hospitality seeming by and by somewhat inclined to abuse it, Rossetti wrote,—

There's a troublesome fellow called Inchbold,
With whom you must be at a pinch bold,
  Or you may as well score
  The brass plate on your door
With the name of J. W. Inchbold.

Sometimes the rhymes would take off, quite harmlessly and pardonably, some physical trait of their subject, as this concerning a senior member of the circle, the shrewd, thoughtful, and interesting but technically less than half-accomplished Scottish artist and verse-writer, William Bell Scott. Scott, a man by this time bald and ageing, was commonly known among his friends as "Scotus":—

There's a crabbèd old fellow called Scott,
Who seems to have hair but has not;
  Did he seem to have sense
  A still vainer pretence
Would be painfully obvious in Scott.

That is all very well; but could the same friend be expected to take it kindly when the essential weaknesses of his talent were faithfully and scathingly hit off as follows?—

> There's a queer kind of painter called Scotus,
> A *pictor* most justly *ignotus*;
> Shall I call him a poet?
> No, not if I know it,
> A draggle-tailed bungler like Scotus.

Scott may in truth very likely never have heard the second of these staves: but had he heard and resented it he could scarcely have paid off the score more ill-naturedly, and at the same time more inaccurately, than by his treatment of Rossetti in his posthumously published *Autobiographical Notes:* a book, I may allow myself to remark by the way, which I have found almost unfailingly inexact in every one of its statements that I have had means or occasion to check. In the floating memories and traditions concerning Rossetti, many of these compositions were long current and some are current still. There is one which I never heard much repeated, and which begins—

> There's an eminent critic called Colvin,
> Whose writings the mind may revolve in,—

but wild horses would not drag from me the sequel; neither does the stave appear in the collection of some two dozen such included by the late William Michael Rossetti in his encyclopædic (and surely too promiscuous and ponderous?) volume of his brother's collected works. On the other hand I find in

that collection a piece of execution which is new to me, performed on the above-mentioned Howell after his dismissal:—

> There's a Portuguese person named Howell
> Who lays on his lies with a trowel;
> Should he give over lying
> 'Twill be when he's dying,
> For living is lying with Howell.

I have said that the years 1868–1872 were critical and fateful years in Rossetti's life. He had already begun to take chloral as a resource against sleeplessness, and the habit grew upon him with disastrous effects. His extreme perturbation under the "Fleshly School" attack showed a mind already morbidly tainted. A few months later he underwent a complete breakdown, almost assuming the form called in French *manie des persécutions*. He harboured torturing suspicions of malice and treachery even against his best-tried friends; and though making for a while a fairly complete recovery, and continuing to paint and write with variable power, but as busily as ever, for near ten years more, was never again quite the man that we had known. I saw him relatively little during those last years, and had little acquaintance with the new friends and satellites—some of them truly attached and helpful—who gathered about him and from among whom have come the fullest accounts written of him after his death.

CHAPTER V

ROBERT BROWNING

No greater contrast in character and mode of life could well exist than between Rossetti and Browning: the one living apart in a seclusion that had about it truly something—though not so much as has been represented—of the morbid and mystical; the other, having once determined to face daylight and the world again after the great tragedy of his wife's death, carrying out his determination resolutely and healthily to the full. Probably there is no instance on record of a great poet leading at once so strenuous a poetical and so busy a social life as Browning during his last twenty or twenty-five years. The contemporary writer *par excellence* of social verse, Frederick Locker, later Locker-Lampson, had at one time seen a good deal of the world, but for the most part of a very distinguished and selected world, and in later life was relatively a recluse, continuing to carve and polish his exquisite poetical cameos at a distance from the crowd. But Browning, hardly ever pausing to let the energies of his intellect and imagination rest from exploration in all manner of fields of human interest remote or near, was at the same time spending himself lavishly in social relations of the most active

and varied kind. To meet him during those years was for many of us, though always a lively pleasure, not an event but a matter of course, seeing that one was apt to meet him at concerts, theatres, picture-galleries, dinner-parties, country houses, in a word everywhere. My own acquaintance with him began in the latest sixties or earliest seventies in a certain hospitable, historic castle on the Cumberland border, than which no house is associated in my mind with more grateful and cordial memories. This was Naworth, near Brampton in Cumberland, one of the two family seats of the Earls of Carlisle, romantically placed on the steep side of a glen overhanging a beck which runs down to meet the Irthing near Lanercost Abbey. It was the country home at that date of George Howard, afterwards ninth earl, and of his wife Rosalind, by birth a Stanley of Alderley. No more exceptional or attractive young couple gathered about them in those days a more varied company of talents and distinctions whether in art, literature, or politics. George Howard had married fresh from Cambridge, where he was a couple of years my senior. His ambition was to be a painter, and he worked sedulously at the art under the teaching of that fine austere craftsman and vigorous, caustically tongued personality, Alphonse Legros.

Besides his painting George Howard cared for nearly all forms of culture. He had a range of manner varying from the most captivatingly cordial and urbane to the cynically sceptical and ironic. He was a born lover of Italy and things Italian. Nature had even modified towards the Italian his strongly marked

hereditary Howard type of countenance, and in Tuscany, where the features of the people generally are apt to bear a special stamp of race and finish, I have often enough observed to myself in driving through some provincial market town, "Why, here is a whole population of George Howards." His wife was in those early days as keen in many interests and as warm in all friendliness as he, with a peculiar winning and whimsical charm of looks and manner all her own and extremely attaching. Changes of view and developments of character came to both in later life, including on the lady's part an extreme and all-absorbing development both of political ultra-radicalism and militant temperance zeal. But for some years from the time of which I speak their homes both on the Northumberland border and in London were centres of a delightful hospitality, and to the opportunities their friendship afforded me my life owes much, which it would be ungrateful not to record. The American sculptor and author William Wetmore Story was a fellow-guest with Browning and myself at Naworth at the time of which I write. They two had long been intimate in Italy. Story was a man exuberantly alive and of talents the readiest and most versatile, acquitting himself with an equally robust and confident facility in monumental and portrait sculpture and in the arts of prose, verse, and conversation. He was half Italianate in vivacity of gesture and manner, and I remember with what amused interest the rest of us sat by and listened while he and Browning lustily kept up between them hour by hour the ball of anecdote and reminiscence and repartee.

Loudness of voice and a vigorous geniality of bearing were what, on the surface, chiefly distinguished Browning from other Englishmen in social life throughout these years. Needless to say, the veriest oaf could not have mistaken them for vulgarity. The poet's biographer and most confidential friend, the late Mrs. Sutherland Orr, used to say that they were originally the mask of a real shyness and diffidence on first confronting, in advanced middle life, the ordeal of mixed general society. I should rather have supposed that they were the natural symptoms of an inborn vital energy surpassing by fivefold those of other men. Certainly the poet's shortish robust figure, held always firmly upright with the powerful grey-haired and bearded head a little thrown back, his cordial greetings and vigorous confidential and affectionate gestures, would have conveyed the impression of such vitality, even had the same impression not been forced upon those of us who were readers by the surprising prodigality in these years (I speak of the early seventies) of his work in literature. He had but lately brought to a conclusion the vast and varied dramatic and psychologic complex of *The Ring and the Book*, surely one of the most strenuous, and as might have been supposed fatiguing, intellectual feats ever achieved by man, and instead of resting proceeded promptly to follow it up by fresh volume after volume; breaking into classic ground in a guise wholly his own with *Balaustion's Adventure*; indulging in the queerest of contrasted freaks in *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau* and *Fifine at the Fair*; going on with *Red Cotton*

Night Cap Country; returning once more to Greek themes and bidding us live with the Athenian dramatists in *Aristophanes's Apology*; and so on, with seldom so much as a year or two's pause in the output. It is a curious fact that in spite of the intensity of intellectual and emotional effort to which for the most part they bear witness, Browning's poetical labours,—excepting, no doubt, those he was accustomed to read aloud among his friends,—were wont to leave little trace or echo in his own memory. Was, this perhaps because of their very rapidity and abundance? Such was at any rate the case; and I remember with what amused gusto he related one day how a lady friend had been reading him out certain verses, and how he had slapped his thigh (a very characteristic action, by the way) and said, "By Jove, that's fine"; how then she had asked him who wrote them and he could not say; and how surprised he was when she had told him they were his own.

Browning's talk had not much intellectual resemblance to his poetry. That is to say, it was not apt to be specially profound or subtle; still less was it ever entangled or obscure. Probably the act of speech did not allow his brain time to perform those prodigies of activity by which it was wont, when he had the pen in hand, to discover a thousand complications and implications and side-issues beneath the surface of the simplest-seeming matters; complications which often he could only express by defying the rules of grammar and discarding half the auxiliary parts of speech, by stitching clause on to clause and packing

parenthesis within parenthesis, till the drift of his sentences became dark and their conclusion undiscoverable. (The mere act of writing seemed to have a peculiar effect on him, for I have known him manage to be obscure even in a telegram.) Rather his style in talk was straightforward, plain, emphatic, heartily and agreeably voluble, ranging easily from deep earnest to jolly jest, rich and varied in matter but avoiding rather than courting the abstruse whether in speculation or controversy, and often condescending freely to ordinary human gossip on a level with the rest of us. Its general tone was genially kind, encouraging and fortifying; but no one was more promptly moved to indignation, indignation to which he never hesitated to give effect, by any tale or instance of cruelty or calumny or injustice: nor could any one be more tenderly or chivalrously sympathetic with the victim of such offences. Not to quote instances known to me of a more private and personal kind, I remember his strong and re-iterated expressions of anger against Froude for having, as he thought, misrepresented the character of Carlyle. Instead of being the hard man figured in Froude's pages—inconsiderate in relations with his wife, unkind, in one instance at least, in his treatment of a horse—Carlyle, maintained Browning, was the most intensely, sensitively tender-hearted of men: and he went on to tell how, as he walked one day in Chelsea with Carlyle's arm in his, a butcher-boy drove by savagely flogging his horse and he felt the sage shake from head to foot in a spasm of righteous indignation.

Browning, living in the world the everyday life he

did, refused with perfect unaffectedness to accept incense or to assume poses or privileges as a poet. At the same time the poet was never far to seek in him, and with equal unaffectedness would come to the front readily on occasion. If the talk ran that way he would quote passages from the English poets, oftenest relatively unknown passages, with powerful effect; for his failure of memory in regard to his own works by no means extended itself to those of others. His memory was well stored with all kinds of eccentric matter, and among the earlier English poets with examples of those whose work most resembled his own by quaintness and toughness of thought. Thus I recollect his coming out once with a long, crabbedly fine screed from John Donne, and declaring he had not read nor called it to mind for thirty years. It was the screed in which Donne, who had written defying and belittling the power of death, now, death having carried off a virtuous and excellent lady of his acquaintance, recants and declares—

> Spiritual treason, atheism 'tis to say
> That any can thy summons disobey.
> Th' earth's face is but thy table; there are set
> Plants, cattle, men, dishes for death to eat.
> In a rude hunger now he millions draws
> Into his bloody, or plaguy, or starved jaws.
> Now wantonly he spoils, and eats us not,
> But breaks off friends, and lets us piecemeal rot.
> Nor will this earth serve him; he sinks the deep
> Where harmless fish monastic silence keep;
> Who—were Death dead—by roes of living sand
> Might sponge that element, and make it land.

I remember also particularly the rich effect with which, though only for my private ear, he recited one evening, on a sofa in a corner after a dinner party, the thundering final stanzas from the *Song of David* of Christopher Smart:—

Glorious the sun in mid career;
Glorious th' assembed fires appear;
  Glorious the comet's train:
Glorious the trumpet and alarm;
Glorious th' Almighty's stretched-out arm;
  Glorious th' enraptured main:

Glorious the northern lights astream;
Glorious the song, when God's the theme;
  Glorious the thunder's roar:
Glorious hosanna from the den;
Glorious the catholic amen;
  Glorious the martyr's gore.

This unfortunate eighteenth-century poet, stale and flat except for that one inspired hour during his insanity when he became equal to the greatest, was at that date unknown to most of us, but had always a special interest for Browning, and is the subject of one of the *Parleyings* in his almost latest volume of verse.

When asked to read poetry of his own in any house or in any company where he could count on intelligent sympathy, Browning was always ready to do so. His utterance was flexible and dramatic, very different from that of Tennyson or Rossetti and such other poets as have preferred in reading their own verses to adopt and sustain one key or another of chanting

monotone. His voice, virile above all things, was strong and inclining to the strident; but in passages which called for it had accents of the most moving tenderness. One reading in especial which I remember as bringing out such tenderness was that of the Pompilia section of *The Ring and the Book*, at certain points in which he could control neither his voice nor his tears, and had nearly all his audience in tears with him. Another reading almost equally moving was of *Andrea del Sarto*; which in one case he followed up by way of contrast with the long tramping measures, duly stressed by his foot stamping vigorously in time, of his Greek battle-poem, *Echetlos*. Neither were such readings the only occasions when I have known this strong man weep. One of my vividest recollections is of an evening when he made one of a party of three to see the great Italian tragedian Salvini play King Lear. Every one had seen Salvini play Othello, his most usual Shakespearean part; but this performance of Lear was new to us all. It turned out to be overwhelming, an absolute, ideal incarnation of ruined age and outcast greatness and shattered reason and unchilded fatherhood and fallen majesty in despair. Browning sat there between us, his face set firm and white like marble, but before the end tears were coursing down it quite unchecked. He seemed unconscious of them, and as we came out could only murmur with a kind of awe, "It makes one wonder which is the greater, the poet or the actor."

Shall I by way of contrast allow myself to recall another scene which is scarce less freshly present to

me, and which illustrates the opposite scale of the poet's being, his partiality for any kind of fun or foolery of which the notion tickled him? In the later seventies he was several times a visitor at Trinity College, Cambridge; usually as the guest of the Master, Dr. Montagu Butler, once, at least, as mine. I asked a party of undergraduates to meet him at breakfast, and he charmed them by his geniality and rich talk, some of it as serious and high-pitched as the most earnest of his admirers could desire. By-and-by there came up the subject of Christian names and their abbreviations, and Browning began telling us how there once came three brothers to be matriculated together at an American University. The registrar asked the first brother his name. "Sam," answered the lad. "That is no name," declared the don with severity, "give me your full name properly." "Samuel, sir," came the reply. To a like question the next brother answered "My name is Lem, sir." "Nonsense," cried the registrar, this time angrily; "say your real name in full." "Lemuel, sir," faltered the culprit. The third brother, being roughly asked the same question, lost his head and twittered: "*Jim*uel, sir." I am sure the story ought to end here, but in sheer high spirits, and to keep up the laugh among the lads round the table, the poet went on to add a climax. The official, he said, thereupon broke into fury, declared the answers had been a plot to insult him, and insisted on knowing which of the brothers had set the others on; whereat they gasped in chorus, each pointing tremblingly at the other,

"*him*uel, sir." Is the little tale, I wonder, one fresh to American readers, or stale? If stale, I hope that, considering from whose mouth I heard it, they will pardon me for here repeating it.

In thinking of this poet as he lived and moved, there is one quality he had which thrusts itself inevitably first upon one's mind, and that is cordiality. Cordial in his thoughts and feelings—unless he had the most cogent grounds to the contrary—cordial in his ways and words, that is what he was above all things, and with a cordiality open and undisguised, even demonstrative beyond what is usual in the intercourse of Englishmen, but at the same time free from any possible suspicion of insincerity. The same quality was conspicuous in his correspondence. I have by me dozens of letters or rather notes from him, proposals for appointments or answers to invitations, and in them all this is the one predominant tone. Among the rest I find two or three which are real, though brief enough, letters, and being unprinted may perhaps interest the reader. When his translation of the *Agamemnon* of Æschylus appeared in 1877, I protested, publicly if I remember aright and at any rate in private, against what I held to be its uncouthly, impermissibly, un-Englishly strained and crabbed literalness. "My dear Colvin," answers the poet, "I am probably more of your mind than you suppose, about the sort of translation I should like for myself and for you: but I only undertook to "transcribe"—esteeming it sufficient success if I put anybody ignorant of Greek in something like the position of one acquainted with it.

This latter person recognizes *under* a given word the corresponding modern sense; but he sees the—perhaps grotesque—word *first*, and supplies the elucidation himself: so I expect an intelligent reader to do, because it seems part of my business to instruct him that, for instance, the Greeks called πράπιδες what we call 'understanding.' But it is ungracious work and I have done with it." A similar defence of his treatment is worked out more fully in the preface; but looking back to-day at the matter of our discussion, I find that in point of fact to make head or tail of Browning's version I have to help myself by the Greek text as being much the more perspicuous of the two, and am more than ever convinced that, for me at all events, just as Rossetti's *Early Italian Poets* is the best of all verse translations, Browning's *Agamemnon* is the worst and most perverse. Fortunately he kept to his purpose declared in the words last quoted, and printed no more translations from the Greek.

Concerning the next letter, I hardly know what can have been the "parcel" to which it refers, unless it were the printed proofs of some lectures which I had lately given in London, and which the poet had done me the honour to attend, on the Amazons, especially the story of Achilles and Penthesilea, as figured in Greek literature and art. The couplet quoted is of course from *Hudibras*:—

"19, Warwick Crescent, W.
"*April* 23, '81.

"My dear Colvin,—

"I blame myself seriously for not having apprised you at once that your parcel had arrived duly and safely; I hardly know,

indeed, how I omitted doing so: your letter, which was followed immediately by the papers it promised,—and the notion that yourself would not be long behind—these, I suppose, made me forgetful of a plain duty,—which I shall not neglect on any future occasion. Thank you for all favours, including the pardon which I hope this apology will procure.

"I find that my assiduity in attending your Lectures has induced somebody to believe the seed sown must needs bear fruit: and so I figure in the American Journals as 'having a poem in the press on the subject of Achilles and Penthesilea.' There are less suggestive subjects,—and I wish that it could be truly said of me —as by Butler of his heroine—

'He laid about their heads as busily
As th' Amazonian Dame Penthesily'

—if I quote correctly—which I doubt. With no doubt at all, my dear Colvin, I am ever

"Yours cordially,
"Robert Browning."

The last, although modesty should perhaps prevent my printing it, is the most interesting, as showing what kind help I had from the master in preparing my volume on Walter Savage Landor for the *English Men of Letters* series, and as summing up the character of his old friend for good and all in a single salvo of adjectives:—

"19, Warwick Crescent, W.
"*July* 12, '81.

"My dear Colvin,—

"The remaining 'proofs' were duly sent me—and I was able to observe how completely you had set the insignificant matters right which were not altogether so before—in the last part, I mean. I have not received the Book itself and though I should be very grateful for it, and all connected with it, I hardly hoped to see my dear provoking admirable unwise learned childish friend put in

just the light which lets all the facets of the jewel do justice to the diamond they diversify. I have heard only one opinion of the exceeding merit of the work. I say this, to dispense you from any suspicion that you are burthened with anything like "gratitude" to me—who am the grateful person under the circumstances—such duties as mine ought to be ordinary with 'friends and fellow students.'

"You must be having wonderful weather where you are: here the heat and glare (not to blaspheme) are extraordinary.

"Ever truly yours,

"Robert Browning."

Any last word in memory of this great poet and many-sided, intensely human spirit should touch on two of his most conspicuous and lovable virtues, which I had ample opportunity of observing; his admirable constancy to old friends and assiduous attention to them in their declining years, as evidenced, for instance, by his relations with Mrs. Procter, the cynically witty, long-enduring, old-age-defying widow of the poet Barry Cornwall; and his intense paternal devotion to his only son. When this adored "Pen"—for so by his pet name he was always called—this child of two mutually devoted parents of genius, had grown to manhood and began to show a certain talent, or at least a certain facility, in the twin arts of sculpture and painting, the eager, deferential solicitude with which his famous father would seek the opinions on the young man's work of those who were supposed to have some intelligence of such matters was a thing infinitely, and considering the mediocrity of the result, almost tragically, touching.

CHAPTER VI

THE PRIORY AND GEORGE ELIOT

From the later sixties down to the mid seventies of the last century, there were for some of us in London two specially attractive resorts for Sunday afternoons. These were The Priory and Little Holland House. The kinds of interest the two houses severally offered differed greatly, the only point in common between them being that both were homes of genius. The Priory was a commonplace detached villa in a fair-sized garden plot in St. John's Wood, the home of George Eliot and G. H. Lewes. Little Holland House in Kensington, a rambling old-fashioned abode in a beautiful well-timbered garden, had originally been a dower-house adjunct to and dependent on the great Holland House and its park; in the years of which I speak it was the joint home of the painter George Frederic Watts and the old friends, the Thoby Prinseps, with whom he was domesticated.

The Priory

The Sunday afternoon receptions at The Priory were not always quite free from stiffness, the presiding genius allowing herself—so at least some of us thought—to be treated a little too markedly and formally as such. Perhaps, however, the secret was that she by nature lacked the lightness of human touch by which

a hostess can diffuse among a mixed company of guests an atmosphere of social ease. Humour in abundance she had, but not of the light, glancing kind: it was a rich, deliberate humour springing from deep sources and corresponding with the general depth and power of her being. The signs of such depth and power were strongly impressed upon her countenance. I have known scarce any one in life whose looks in their own way more strongly drew and held one. She had of course no regular beauty (who was it that asked the question, "Have you seen a horse, sir? Then you have seen George Eliot"?): but the expression of her long, strong, deeply ploughed features, was one not only of habitual brooding thought and intellectual travail but of intense and yearning human sympathy and tenderness. There could hardly be a truer record of her looks than that conveyed in the well-known etching by Rajon after the life-sized drawing by F. W. Burton. If it had been her nature to seek equality of regard and companionship from those visitors who came about her, Lewes, I think, would have hardly made it possible. His own attitude was always that of the tenderest, most solicitous adoration; and adoration, homage, was what he seemed to expect for her from all who came about them. He never encouraged the conversation among the Sunday guests in the room to become equal or general, or allowed one of them to absorb her attention for very long, but would bring up one after another to have his or her share of it in turn, so that if any of us began to feel that talk with her was taking an easier and closer turn than usual,

the next thing was that it was sure to be interrupted. I recall the beginnings of several conversations which were thus broken before I had succeeded in getting more from her than sympathetic enquiries about my own work and studies, or perhaps about the places I had last been visiting in France or Italy. Naturally I valued such enquiries, but was not at all seeking them: what I wanted was not to be drawn out myself but to draw out my hostess and feel her powers playing —the spell of her mind and character acting—upon me and upon the company generally.

Lewes, when he had cut into the talk and carried one off as I have said, would entertain one genially and kindly in his own way in another part of the room, among some group of guests either fresh from or awaiting similar treatment. If George Eliot's countenance was of the equine type, his was not less distinctly of the simian, but having its ugliness redeemed by winning smiles both of humour and affection. Besides entertaining the day's guests, or helping them to entertain each other, in groups, Lewes liked sometimes to get a few minutes' chat apart with a single one coming or going; but the subject was almost always connected in some way with George Eliot's work and fame. During the serial publication of *Middlemarch* I particularly remember his taking me apart one day as I came in, and holding me by the button as he announced to me in confidence concerning one of its chief characters, "Celia is going to have a baby!" This with an air at once gratified and mysterious, like that of some female gossip of a young bride in real life.

CHAPTER VII

LITTLE HOLLAND HOUSE AND G. F. WATTS

At Little Holland House, where Watts lived during these same years, the atmosphere, although an atmosphere of genius, was of a totally different kind. The Thoby Prinseps, his permanent hosts, or rather housemates, were people of marked characters and interesting associations of their own. Prinsep, by this time advanced in years, had been a distinguished Indian civil servant and one of the earliest members of the new Indian Council created after the mutiny, when the government of the dependency was taken out of the hands of the old East India Company. He was a man of attractive and imposing presence even after infirmity had compelled him to use a wheeled-chair for movement in his garden and deafness had made talk with him difficult. His wife was one of the seven daughters of James Pattle of the Indian Civil Service, all remarkable women and several of them famous in their day. The most beautiful of the sisters was Virginia, Countess Somers. The most original in gift and achievement was Julia, Mrs. Cameron. A close and hearty friend of half the most distinguished men of her time, she had in what were relatively the early days of photography made for the purposes of por-

traiture almost an original art of it, such were the personal power and such the devices of lighting and focusing by which she imposed upon her sitters the characters and aspects she divined as most vitally and significantly theirs. With her untidy wisps of grizzling hair and her fingers stained brown with photographic chemicals, this lady presented nothing very attractive to the eye, but her resources of mind and character made themselves felt not less strikingly in her talk than in her work. Without the originality of Mrs. Cameron or the beauty of Lady Somers and some of the other sisters (one of whom was by marriage an aunt of my own), Mrs. Prinsep possessed faculties as personal and notable as any of them. Circumstance and opportunity led her to employ the genial richness and heartiness of her nature chiefly in playing the part of hostess. For some years before I was grown up and going about in the world, the Sunday afternoon gatherings at Little Holland House had already become a feature in London life. Not only artists, but men of letters, statesmen, politicians, travellers, were all to be met there, and all in the temper to enjoy and admire: no atmosphere could be more unlike that of one of the season's outdoor or indoor crushes, at which a crowd assembles to jostle and swelter as a matter of fashion or social obligation.

It was understood that the main attraction at these receptions, over and above the half rural pleasantness of the scene and the hospitality of the atmosphere, was the fame and personality of the great artist Watts. It has always seemed to me a note to the social credit

of that day that a man of Watts's undistinguished origin, (his father had been an unsuccessful musical instrument-maker,) and of his extreme and perfectly unaffected modesty and simplicity of character, should have been honoured and sought after as he was. It is true that both in looks and bearing he had a natural distinction which must always and in any company have been noticeable. Middle-sized and slightly stooping, he had finely chiselled features and brown eyes of a fine pensive expression, with hair and beard which his friends saw slowly changing through the years from rich brown to a grey that was almost white. There was about him a total lack of, and indeed incapacity for, any manner of pose or pretension. By lack of pretension must by no means be understood lack of ambition. His ambition, which was not at all for himself but singly and entirely for his art, was indeed a very part of his simplicity. Of the functions of art in the life of a community no man has ever held a more exalted conception. He was continually expending his energies and his influence, sometimes successfully, more often in vain, in the endeavour to be allowed to decorate the wall-spaces of public buildings with monumental compositions of high moral, historical, or allegorical significance. Alike by natural instinct and by strenuous technical study and experiment he was qualified, as very few artists in England have been, as a painter on a monumental scale or decorator of great wall-spaces. And fortunate it was that he was so qualified, seeing that the interest paramount in his own mind in undertaking such work was never the

truly and singly artistic, it was always the moral and didactic interest. But he could not help being a fine designer and born decorator, as it were in spite of himself. His passion for allegoric and didactic painting made him unjust to and even contemptuous of his own powers in that other branch of art—portraiture to wit—by which he was compelled to live. Fine and dignified as are the few monumental schemes which he was given opportunity to carry out, beautiful in the qualities of painting proper as are many of his moral and allegoric compositions on a smaller scale, posterity is unlikely to regret that the conditions of the time made portrait-painting his chief resource and means of livelihood. There was plenty of vulgarity in the Victorian age, but in Watts's record of that age there is no breath or taint or shadow of it. This is not due to any fudging or insincerity in the artist, but partly to the fact that among his sitters were few save the very pick of contemporary men and women; partly to those qualities in his own eye and hand which could not but discern and instinctively reproduce whatever in the types and characters of nineteenth-century England was akin to those of the sixteenth-century Venice which seemed as if it had been his spiritual birth-place.

It was a sad and heartfelt loss to many of us when about 1875, the painter being then a little short of his sixty-eighth year, the loved and familiar scene of his activity was broken up. The ground on which the old Little Holland House and its outbuildings and gardens had stood was sold, and Watts had to create a new

home for himself. After an interval spent chiefly in the Isle of Wight, he built, as is well known, a new Little Holland House in Melbury Road on a corner of the ground which had been occupied by the old. But this was a Little Holland House, so far as its external aspects and surroundings were concerned, only in name. The fine genius who dwelt in it was of course quite unchanged: his beautiful simplicities of character did but increase with age, his high ambitions both in decorative painting and monumental sculpture continued with increase rather than abatement: by and by there came into his life the new happiness of a wife who proved faultlessly tactful in sympathy and wise in tendence; and those of us who had loved and honoured the master in those earlier years had the joy of seeing him live on to a patriarchal age with increase rather than diminution of universal regard. In these later years he spent the winters, and towards the end the whole of his time, at a new home, "Limnerslease," which he had built for himself on the Hog's Back, near Guildford, and where a pick of his works is now set out permanently on public exhibition. But for the purpose of these present reminiscences it is naturally the earlier years, and the special romance and charm and impressiveness of the earlier, now long vanished surroundings, that rise up and insist on being recalled, however briefly.

CHAPTER VIII

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Readers and lovers of Stevenson, in my experience, are generally to be divided into two sorts or classes. One sort care most for his stories, delighting in the humorous or tragic vitality of his characters and the thrill of the situations in which he puts them. The other sort are more interested in the man himself, and prefer the essays and letters, the books of travel and reminiscence in which he takes you into his own company and confidence. Readers of this latter class would rather paddle with Stevenson in his canoe down the Sambre and Oise, look out with him from the tower of Noyon Cathedral, or join in his farewell greetings to the three Graces of Origny—they would rather sleep under the stars with him and the she-ass Modestine in the woods of Gévaudan, or hear him moralize on the life of the Trappist monks in the convent of Our Lady of the Snows—than they would crouch in the apple-barrel with Jim Hawkins on board the *Hispaniola* and overhear the plotting of the mutineers, or lie sick with David Balfour in the house of Robin Oig while the host and Alan Breck challenge each other to their match upon the pipes. It pleases such readers better

to learn from Stevenson in the first person how his Brownies, as he calls them, furnished to him in dreams the most shudderful incidents in the parable of Jekyll and Hyde than to read these incidents themselves in the pages of the book. The fortunes of Prince Otto and Seraphina and Gondremark and Countess von Rosen interest them, it may be, less in the tale itself than in the letters in which Stevenson tells his correspondents of his delighted toil over the tale and of the high hopes that he has built upon it. They may be less moved—though that I find it hard to conceive—by the scene of the torn hymn-book and the birth of passion between Archie Weir and Kirstie Eliot in the little Pentland church than by the note of acute personal emotion which a thought of the same church arouses in Stevenson writing to a friend from exile.

My own view is that both sides of him—the creative artist and the human personality—are interesting and admirable alike. But what I am now about to write will concern the man himself rather than any phase of his work. I shall dip a random bucket into the well of memory, and try whether the yield, from our fourteen years of close intimacy, may be such as to supplement and complete to any purpose the image which readers may otherwise have formed of him. And first, to wipe away some false impressions which seem to be current:—I lately found one writer, because Stevenson was thin, speaking of him as having been a "shadowy" figure; another, because he was an invalid, describing him as "anæmic," and a third as

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"thin-blooded." Shadowy! he was indeed all his life a bag of bones, a very lath for leanness; as lean as Shakespeare's Master Slender, or let us say as Don Quixote. Nevertheless when he was in the room it was the other people, and not he, who seemed the shadows. The most robust of ordinary men seemed to turn dim and null in presence of the vitality that glowed in the steadfast, penetrating fire of the lean man's eyes, the rich, compelling charm of his smile, the lissom swiftness of his movements and lively expressiveness of his gestures, above all in the irresistible sympathetic play and abundance of his talk. Anæmic! thin-blooded! the main physical fact about him, according to those of his doctors whom I have questioned, was that his heart was too big and its blood supply too full for his body. There was failure of nutrition, in the sense that he could never make flesh; there was weakness of the throat and lungs, weakness above all of the arteries, never of the heart itself; nor did his looks, even in mortal illness and exhaustion, ever give the impression of bloodlessness. More than one of his early friends, in describing him as habitually pale, have let their memory be betrayed by knowledge of what might have been expected in one so frail in health. To add, as some have done, that his hair was black is to misdescribe him still farther. As a matter of fact his face, forehead and all, was throughout the years when I knew him of an even, rather high, colour varying little whether he was ill or well; and his hair, of a lightish brown in youth, although the brown grew darker with years, and darker still, I

believe, in the tropics, can never have approached black.

If you want to realize the kind of effect he made, at least in the early years when I knew him best, imagine this attenuated but extraordinarily vivid and vital presence, with something about it that at first struck you as freakish, rare, fantastic, a touch of the elfin and unearthly, a sprite, an Ariel. And imagine that, as you got to know him, this sprite, this visitant from another sphere, turned out to differ from mankind in general not by being less human but by being a great deal more human than they; richer-blooded, greater-hearted; more human in all senses of the word, for he comprised within himself, and would flash on you in the course of a single afternoon, all the different ages and half the different characters of man, the unfaded freshness of a child, the ardent outlook and adventurous day-dreams of a boy, the steadfast courage of manhood, the quick sympathetic tenderness of a woman, and already, as early as the mid-twenties of his life, an almost uncanny share of the ripe life-wisdom of old age. He was a fellow of infinite and unrestrained jest and yet of infinite earnest, the one very often a mask for the other; a poet, an artist, an adventurer; a man beset with fleshly frailties, and despite his infirm health of strong appetities and unchecked curiosities; and yet a profoundly sincere moralist and preacher and son of the Covenanters after his fashion, deeply conscious of the war within his members, and deeply bent on acting up to the best he knew. Henley tried to sum him up in a well-known sonnet:—

"Thin-legged, thin-chested, slight unspeakably,
Neat-footed and weak-fingered: in his face—
Lean, large-boned, curved of beak, and touched with race,
Bold-lipped, rich-tinted, mutable as the sea,
The brown eyes radiant with vivacity—
There shines a brilliant and romantic grace,
A spirit intense and rare, with trace on trace
Of passion and impudence and energy.
Valiant in velvet, light in ragged luck,
Most vain, most generous, sternly critical,
Buffoon and poet, lover and sensualist:
A deal of Ariel, just a streak of Puck,
Much Anthony, of Hamlet most of all,
And something of the Shorter-Catechist."

In that sonnet Henley has drawn up a lively and showy—or shall we not rather say flashy?—enough catalogue of the diverse qualities and contradictory aspects which he recognized in his friend. But the pity is that as there described those qualities lie like spillikins, unrelated and disconnected. Henley has missed what gave its unity to the character and what every other among his nearer friends soon discovered to be the one essential, never failing and ever endearing thing under all that play and diversity of being. This was the infinitely kind and tender, devotedly generous, brave and loving heart of the man.

I first saw him at the beginning of August, 1873, that is all but forty-eight years ago, when he was twenty-three and I twenty-eight. I had landed from a Great-Eastern train at a little country station in Suffolk, and was met on the platform by a stripling in a velvet jacket and straw hat, who walked up

with me to the country rectory where he was staying and where I had come to stay. I had lately been appointed Slade Professor at Cambridge; the rectory was that of Cockfield, near Bury St. Edmunds; the host was my much older colleague Professor Churchill Babington, of amiable and learned memory; the hostess was his wife, a grand-daughter of the Rev. Lewis Balfour of Colinton, Midlothian; the youth was her young first cousin by the mother's side, Louis Stevenson from Edinburgh. The first shyness over I realized in the course of that short walk how well I had done to follow the advice of a fellow-guest who had preceded me in the house—to wit Mrs. Sitwell, my wife as she came later on to be. She had written to me about this youth, declaring that I should find him a real young genius and urging me to come if I could before he went away. I could not wonder at what I presently learnt—how within an hour of his first appearance at the rectory, knapsack on back, a few days earlier, he had captivated the whole household. To his cousin the hostess, a woman of a fine sympathetic nature and quick, humorous intelligence, he was of course well known beforehand, though she had never seen him in so charming a light as now. With her husband the Professor, a clergyman of solid antiquarian and ecclesiastical knowledge and an almost Pickwickian simplicity of character corresponding to his lovable rotund visage and innocently beaming spectacles—with the Professor, "Stivvy," as he called his wife's young cousin, was already something of a favourite. Of their guests, I found one, a boy of ten,

watching for every moment when he could monopolize the newcomer's attention, either to show off to him the scenes of his toy theatre or to conduct him confidentially by the hand about the garden or beside the moat; while between him and the boy's mother, Mrs. Sitwell, there had sprung up an instantaneous understanding. Not only the lights and brilliancies of his nature, but the strengths and glooms that underlay them, were from the first apparent to her, so that in the trying season of his life which followed he was moved to throw himself upon her sympathies with the unlimited confidence and devotion to which his letters of the time bear witness. He sped those summer nights and days for us all as I have scarce known any sped before or since. He seemed, this youngster, already to have lived and seen and felt and dreamed and laughed and longed more than others do in a lifetime. He showed himself moreover full of reading, at least in English and French—for his Latin was shaky and Greek he only got at through translations. Over wide ranges of life and letters his mind and speech ran like the fingers of a musician over the keyboard of an instrument. Pure poetic eloquence (coloured always, be it remembered, by a strong Scottish accent), grave argument and criticism, riotous freaks of fancy, flashes of nonsense more illuminating than wisdom, streamed from him inexhaustibly as he kindled with delight at the delight of his hearers.

Strange to say, this brilliant creature, though he had made one or two close and appreciative intimates of his own age and sex, had not been thought good

enough for the polite society of his native Edinburgh. In most of the few houses which he frequented he seems to have been taken for an eccentric and affected kind of Bohemian *poseur*, to be treated at best with toleration. In a book, or if I remember rightly in more than one book, on his early Edinburgh days, a member of one of those houses, and sister of one of his special friends, has since his death written of him in a fine superior tone of retrospective condescension. In new and more sympathetic company his social genius immediately expanded and glowed as I have said, till all of us seemed to catch something of his own gift and inspiration. This power of inspiring others has been noted by many of those who knew Stevenson later as an especial and distinguishing mark of his conversation. As long as he was there you kept discovering with delight unexpected powers in yourself. You felt as if you had taken service with a conjuror, whom you supplied with balls of clay and who took them and turned them into gold and sent them whirling and glowing about his head, making you believe all the while that they were still truly yours.

But on further acquaintance it soon became clear that under all this captivating, this contagious gaiety and charm there lay a troubled spirit, in grave risk from the perils of youth, from a constitution naturally frail and already heavily over-strained, from self-distrust and uncertainty as to his own powers and purposes, and above all from the misery of bitter, heart- and soul-rending disagreements with a father to whom he was devotedly attached. It was only when, after

a brief return to Edinburgh from Cockfield, he came south again in the next month that we discovered so much concerning him. He spent his time partly in London and partly with me in a cottage I then inhabited in the southern hill-suburb of Norwood. With various types of genius and of the charm and power of genius among my elders I had already, as indicated in some of the earlier pages of this book, had fortunate opportunities of becoming familiar. In this brilliant and troubled Scotch youth I could not fail to realize that here, among my juniors, was a genius who might well fail on the threshold of life, but who, if he could only win through, had it in him to take as shining a place as any of them. No wonder if we, his new friends, were keen to do all we could for him in the way of help and sympathy. It was no surprise to us when towards mid-October, after a second return to Edinburgh, his letters brought news of threatening illness, nor when, having again come south to be examined, as had been agreed with his father, for admission into one of the London Inns of Court, he had perforce to change his purpose and undergo a different kind of examination at the hands of Sir Andrew Clark. That wise physician peremptorily ordered him a period of rest in the soothing climate of the French Riviera, out of reach of all occasion or possibility of contention with those he loved at home.

The recollections of him that remain with me from the next few years are partly of two visits I paid him in the course of that first winter (1873–1874) on the Riviera; partly of visits he paid me in the Norwood

cottage, or in another cottage I rented a little later at Hampstead, or later again in college rooms which I occupied as a professor at Cambridge; partly from his various descents upon or passages through London, made sometimes from Edinburgh and sometimes from France, after his return in 1874 to his now reconciled home. The points in his character these stray recollections chiefly illustrate are, first, the longing for a life of action and adventure, which in an ordinary youth might have passed as a matter of course but in one already so stricken in health seemed pathetically vain; next, his inborn faculty—a very much rarer gift—as an artist in letters, and the scrupulous self-training by which almost from boyhood he had been privately disciplining it: then the intensely, quite exceptionally, observing and loving interest he took in young children: and above all, that magical power he had of winning the delighted affection, the immediate confidence, of men and women of the most various sorts and conditions, always excepting those hide-bound in starched propriety or conventional official-dom, whom he had a scarce less unfailing power of putting against him at first sight.

At the Suffolk rectory he had been neatly enough clad: most of the images of him that rise next before me present him in the slovenly, nondescript Bohemian garments and untrimmed hair which it was in those days his custom to wear. I could somehow never feel this to be an affectation in Stevenson, or dislike it as I should have been apt to dislike and perhaps despise it in anybody else. We agree to give the name of affec-

tation to anything markedly different from common usage in little, every-day outward things—unconcerning things, as the poet Donne calls them. But affectation is affectation indeed only when a person does or says that which is false to his or her nature. And given a nature differing sufficiently from the average, perhaps the real affectation would be that it should force itself to preserve an average outside to the world. Stevenson's uncut hair came originally from the fear of catching cold. His shabby clothes came partly from lack of cash, partly from lack of care, partly, as I think I have said elsewhere, from a hankering after social experiment and adventure, and a dislike of being identified with any special class or caste. Certainly conventional and respectable attire, when by exception he wore it, did not in those days sit him well. Going with me one day from Hampstead to the Royal Academy Exhibition, he thought such attire would be expected of him, and looked out a black frock coat and tall hat which he had once worn at a wedding. I can see now the odd figure he made as he walked with me in that unwonted garb down Regent Street and along Piccadilly. True, he carried his tall hat not on his head, but in his hand because it chafed him. Also, being fresh from an enthusiastic study of the prosody of Milton, he kept declaiming to me with rapturous comments as we walked the lines and cadences which chiefly haunted him :—

> "His wrath
> Burned after them to the bottomless pit."
> "Like Teneriffe or Atlas, unremoved—"

"All night the dreadless angel, unpursued—"
"Oh! how comely it is and how reviving
To the spirits of just men long opprest!"

It was while he declaimed these last two lines, the opening of a famous chorus in *Samson Agonistes*, that the gates of Burlington House, I remember, enfolded us.

More characteristic of his ordinary ways was his appearance one very early morning from London at the Norwood cottage. He presented himself to my astonished servant, on her opening the shutters, wearing a worn-out sleeved waistcoat over a black flannel shirt, and weary and dirty from a night's walking followed by a couple of hours' slumber in a garden outhouse he had found open. He had spent the night on the pad through the southern slums and suburbs, trying to arouse the suspicions of one policeman after another till he should succeed in getting taken up as a rogue and vagabond and thereby gaining proof for his fixed belief that justice, at least in the hands of its subordinate officers, has one pair of scales for the ragged and another for the respectable. But one and all saw through him, and refused to take him seriously as a member of the criminal classes. Though surprised at their penetration, and rather crestfallen at the failure of his attempt, he had had his reward in a number of friendly and entertaining conversations with the members of the force, ending generally in confidential disclosures as to their private affairs and feelings.

Foreign officials and police, not to speak of *attachés*

and bank clerks and managers, were not so clear-sighted, and he sometimes came in for worse treatment than he bargained for. Readers remember, I dare say, his account of his expulsion by the hostess of La Fêre in the *Inland Voyage*, still more that of his arrest and temporary imprisonment by the Commissary of Police at Châtillon-sur-Loing, which is one of the most delectable pieces of humorous narrative in English literature. Troubles of this kind had their consolation in that they gave him matter for the entertainment of his readers. Not so the rebuffs he sometimes underwent when he visited embassies or banks on business concerned with passports or letters of credit. I have known him made actually ill by futile anger at the contumelious reception he met with in such places. He lacked the power, which comes only too naturally from most men sprung, as he was, from a stock accustomed to command, of putting down insolence by greater insolence. He could rage, indeed, but usually his rage was ineffectual and only brought a dangerous rush of blood to his head and eyes. Once, however, he had his revenge and his hour of triumph, of which to my deep regret I was not myself a witness. On the way from Nice to Royat he had stopped at Clermont-Ferrand, the old provincial capital of Auvergne. He went to a bank to cash some circular notes of the British Linen Company in Edinburgh. His appearance had the usual, almost magical, effect of arousing in the business mind suspicions, amounting to conviction, of his dishonesty. The men in office roundly told him that there was no such firm among their corre-

spondents; that they more than suspected him of having come with intent to defraud, but as an act of kindness would give him five minutes to make himself scarce before they sent for the police. For once he kept his head and temper, outwardly at least; sturdily declined to leave the premises; and insisted that the police should be sent for immediately. Presently his eye was caught by a rack of pigeon-holes containing letters and documents which by some intuition he saw or divined to be from foreign correspondents of the firm; dashed at it despite all remonstrances; rummaged the papers before the eyes of the astonished clerks; drew forth in triumph a bundle containing correspondence from the British Linen Company, including the letter of credit for himself; demanded that the partners and men in authority should be brought down, and when they appeared, exposed to them with a torrent of scornful eloquence their misconduct of their business, and drew a terrifying picture of the ruin that they must inevitably reap from such treatment of distinguished foreign clients. His triumph was complete: the whole house, partners and clerks, abased themselves in regrets and apologies, and escorted him to the door with fawning demonstrations of respect. This was his day of victory; *strages bankerorum* he called it, and went off and at once designed a medal—never, I believe, executed—in its commemoration.

But this story belongs to a later date; and to go back to my own memories of the early days—I went twice to see him during that invalid winter on the

Riviera. He had been staying at Mentone (I should properly say Menton, but those of us who remember the place before the annexation of Savoy and Nice to France cannot bring ourselves to spell or pronounce it except in the more euphonious Italian manner). I proposed that he should move to meet me as far (some six miles) as Monaco; the aspect of that tiny capital, with the exquisite capricious charm of its situation on a high peninsular rock between the harbour and the outer sea, having strongly caught my fancy as a boy in driving along the Corniche road with my father, and made me desire to explore it from within. There we accordingly spent four or five days, and then four or five more in one of the quieter hotels at Monte Carlo. My memories of the time have merged for the most part into a generalized impression of sunlit hours spent basking in a row-boat about the bay, and sped by endless talk which ran forward beyond the present days of illness to ardent schemes both of literature and adventure, the one as vividly imagined and worded as the other. Stevenson has brought home to the senses of his readers, by a magical phrase or two, the pungently delicious mingled scent of pine and juniper and myrtle and rosemary which in sunny weather comes wafted from the Cap Martin over the shoreward waters of that sea: he revelled in this scent, and I believe it was already carrying him in imagination on voyages to far-off spice-islands of the East. Of the literary projects broached between us the only one I remember was a spectacle-play on that transcendent type of human vanity, Herostratus,

who to keep his name from being forgotten kindled the fire that burned down the temple of Ephesus. Psychology and scenic effects as Stevenson descanted on them come up together in my memory even yet, not in any exactness of detail, but only in a kind of vague dazzle and flamboyance.

There was one sort of excitement and one form of risk which at no time had any lure for Louis and which he hated alike by instinct and principle, and that was gambling for money; and into that famous and fascinating cosmopolitan hell, the Casino of Monte Carlo, he never entered. Once or twice I looked in by myself to watch the play; and the last time, hearing a sudden sharp "ping" from near the wall of the room over my right shoulder, I turned and saw that a loser having left the table lay writhing on the floor. He had shot himself, fatally as I afterwards learnt, in the stomach. The attendants promptly came forward, lifted him on to an armchair, and carried him out of the room with an air of grave disapproval and shocked decorum. When I told Louis of the scene he took a disgust at the place, and we left it together for Mentone. After I had seen him installed in fresh and comfortable quarters in the Hotel Mirabeau, now defunct, at the eastern end of the town, I left for Paris, where I had a few weeks' work to do. Returning in January, I found him enjoying the company of two Russian sisters living in a villa annexed to the hotel, ladies some twenty years older than himself, to whom and to their children he had become quickly and warmly attached. I say their children, for we

never could well make out which child belonged to which sister, or whether one of the two was not the mother of them both. Both were brilliantly accomplished and cultivated women, one having all the unblushing outspokenness of her race, its unchecked vehemence and mutability in mirth and anger, in scorn, attachment, or aversion; the other much of an invalid, consistently gentle and sympathetic, and withal an exquisite musician. For Stevenson this sister conceived a great quasi-maternal tenderness, and one of the odd tricks my memory has played me is that my nerves retain even now the sense of her sharp twitch of pain as I spoke one day, while she was walking with her arm in mine, of the fears entertained by his friends for his health and future. It was the younger of the two children who figures so much under her name Nelitchka in his letters of the time. Hardly any one has written of young children with such yearning inwardness of love combined with so much analytic intentness and subtlety of observation as he. But how, the reader may interrupt, how about the illustrious Victor Hugo with his *L-Art d'être grand-père* and his *Les Enfants*? The comparison indeed sounds crushing; but perhaps Hugo's work in this kind, full of genius as it is, full of insight and tenderness, would impress more if there were not so overwhelmingly much of it, if it did not burden us with a sense of almost mechanical abundance and redundance and iteration. The small objects of Stevenson's passionately delighted study were not always at first won or attracted by him. Rather they were

apt to feel discomposed under the intensity of the beaming gaze he fastened upon them; and it was with a touch of womanly affront at feeling herself too hard stared at that the baby Nelitchka (aged two and a half) addressed him by a word for "rogue" or " naughty man " she had lately picked up in Italy, " Berecchino ! " Parental interposition presently reconciled her, and they became fast friends and playmates ; but the name stuck, and for Nellie, throughout those weeks when the child's company and the watching of her indefatigable tottering efforts to dance, and dance, and dance to her mother's music were among his chief delights—for Nellie, Stevenson was never anything but Monsieur Berecchino. But of this more anon.

Another memory of the time illustrates the hopeless incompatibility that existed between this young genius and the more frozen types of bourgeois conventionality. There was at our hotel a young or youngish, well-groomed Frenchman of this class, the quintessence of respectable nullity and complacent correctness, who sat at the same long table with us for some weeks. At our end of the table, besides Stevenson and myself with the Russian ladies and their children, there sat also a bearded French landscape painter, Robinet by name, in opinions a violent clerical and reactionary, but an artist and the best of genial good fellows. Day after day Stevenson kept this little company in an enchanted atmosphere of mirth and mutual delight with one another and with him. But the glow which enkindled the rest of us stopped dead short of the

correct Frenchman, who sat a little apart, icily isolated, annoyed, envying, disapproving. Stevenson, I think, was hardly aware of his existence at all, more than of a wooden dummy. R. L. S. was drawing more or less consciously from himself when he wrote of one of his characters, Dick Naseby in *The Story of a Lie*—He was a type-hunter among mankind. He despised small game and insignificant personalities, whether in the shape of dukes or bagmen, letting them go by like seaweed ; but show him a refined or powerful face, let him hear a plangent or a penetrating voice, fish for him with a living look in some one's eye, a passionate gesture, a meaning or ambiguous smile, and his mind was instantaneously awakened. Finding himself thus left out in the cold, not rudely or on purpose, for Stevenson was incapable of a conscious rudeness, but nevertheless left out, from a company which included obviously attractive ladies, my Frenchman could not bear it. One day, on the occasion of some commonplace civility I showed him, he confided to me, with no breach of correct manners, the extreme distaste and resentment he had conceived against my friend, and even indicated that he would like to call him out if he could find an excuse. There was nothing to be done, no possible point of mutual contact or understanding between them. I could but affably suggest that he would be likely to find more sympathetic company at another hotel ; and he took the hint.

The warm regard which sprang up in these Mentone days between Stevenson and those two Russian sisters led to a promise that in the next summer he should

pay them a visit in their own country. But circumstances made it impossible for him to fulfil the promise; the intimacy of those winter months on the Riviera had no sequel save a correspondence which flagged after a few months and by and by failed altogether; and neither he nor I ever saw or heard of either sister again.

To the same winter months on the French Riviera belongs the first meeting of Stevenson with another gifted Scotsman of letters, Andrew Lang, in those days also threatened with lung trouble, who became his friend and long outlived him. It seems indeed but the other day that we had to mourn the loss from among us of that kind, learned, whimsical, many-faceted character—scholar, critic, poet, journalist, folk-lorist, humanist, and humorist; and in the mind's eye of many of us there still lives freshly the aspect of the half-silvered hair setting off the all but black eyebrows and gipsy eyes; of the chiselled features, the smiling languid face and grace behind which there lurked intellectual energies so keen and varied, accomplishments so high, so insatiable a spirit of curiosity and research under a guise so airy and playful. A fault, or flaw, or perversity in Lang, no doubt, was the trick of flippancy which he allowed to spoil some of his work and which masked altogether from some eyes the fine substance and quality of the man. Another was the habitual preoccupation with his own ideas which made his manner, to women especially, often seem careless and abstracted, or even rude, when rudeness was farthest from his intention. But towards

his friends there was no man steadier in kindness or more generous in appreciation, as I for one can testify from more than forty years' experience, and as Stevenson had full occasion to know. It was not without some trepidation that I first brought them together in those Mentone days, for I suppose no two young Scots, especially no two sharing so many literary tastes, were ever more unlike by temperament and training. On the one hand the young Oxford don, a successful and typical scholar on the regular academic lines, picturesque by the gift of nature but fastidiously correct and reserved, purely English in speech, with a recurring falsetto note in the voice—that kind of falsetto that bespeaks languor rather than vehemence; full of literature and pleasantry but on his guard, even to affectation, against any show of emotion, and consistently dissembling the *perfervidum ingenium* of his race, if he had it, under a cloak of indifference and light banter. On the other hand the brilliant, irregularly educated lad from Edinburgh, to the conventional eye an eccentrically ill-clad and long-haired nondescript, with the rich Lallan accent on his tongue, the obvious innate virility and spirit of adventure in him ever in mutiny against the invalid habits imposed by ill-health, the vivid, demonstrative ways, every impulse of his heart and mind flashing out in the play of eye, feature, and gesture no less than in the humorous riot and poetical abundance of his talk. There were symptoms during, and even after, the first meeting of the two which seemed as though the kind of misunderstanding might spring up between them which I had feared;

but such an immediate result having been happily averted they learned quickly to appreciate each other's gifts and company, and remained fast friends to the end. There are few finer tributes by one man of letters to another, his contemporary, than that of Lang to Stevenson in the introduction to the Swanston edition.

After his return from the Riviera in 1874 Stevenson was elected to the Savile club, then quartered in the house in Savile Row from which it takes its name and which it afterwards outgrew. (It had previously led for a few years a precarious kind of chrysalis existence, under the title of the New Club, in Spring Gardens off Charing Cross.) This little society had been founded on a principle aimed against the stand-offishness customary in English club life, and all members were expected to hold themselves predisposed to talk and liable to accost without introduction. Stevenson's earliest friends in the club besides myself were Fleeming Jenkin, the most versatile and vivacious, most pugnaciously minded and friendliest-hearted of men, the single one among his Edinburgh seniors and teachers who had seen what the lad was worth, truant pupil though he might be, and made a friend of him; and my Cambridge contemporary, Professor W. K. Clifford, that short-lived genius unequalled and unapproached, as those aver who can follow him, in the rarefied region of speculation where the higher mathematics and metaphysics merge into one. In spheres of thought and study more accessible to the rest of us, Clifford had a beautiful lucidity of mind and mastery of style, and in ordinary human intercourse was

extremely striking and attractive, with his powerful head and blunt Socratic features, the candid, almost childlike, upcast look of his light grey-blue eyes between their dark lashes, the tripping and easy, again almost childlike, simplicity of speech and manner with which he would debate the profoundest problems, and the quite childlike pleasure he took in all manner of fun and nonsense and surprises and fairy-tales (I leave out his freaks of prowess and daring as an athlete and a dozen of his other claims to regard and admiration). That such a man, having met Stevenson once or twice in my company, should be keen to back him for the club was a matter of course. Nor did the members in general, being for the most part young men drawn from the professions of science or learning, of art, literature, journalism, or the stage, fail to appreciate the new-comer. On his visits to London he generally lunched there, and at the meal and afterwards came to be accepted and habitually surrounded as a radiating centre of good talk, a kind of ideal incarnation of the spirit of the society. Comparatively rare as they were, I believe that both his presences in those days and his tradition subsequently contributed as much as anything towards the success and prosperity of the club. Mr. Edmund Gosse, who joined us a couple of years later, has given a pleasantly vivid picture of the days when an introduction at the Savile, renewing the memory of a chance meeting on a Highland pleasure-steamer six years before, laid the foundations of his and Stevenson's friendship. One signal case of failure remains indeed in some of our memories. A certain

newly elected member of some social and literary standing, but unacquainted with the spirit of the place, sat lunching alone. Stevenson, desiring to welcome him and make him feel at home, went over and opened talk in his most gracious manner. His advance was received with a cold rebuff and the implied intimation that the stranger desired no company but his own. Stevenson came away furious, and presently relieved his wrath with the lampoon which is included in his published works and begins (the offender being made to speak in the first person):—

> "I am a kind of farthing dip
> Unfriendly to the nose and eyes."

But to turn from such social memories, which will be shared by a dwindling band of survivors from the middle and later seventies, to those private to myself:—it was in the early summer of 1874, soon after the appearance of his second published paper, *Ordered South*, that he spent a fortnight with me in my quarters on Hampstead Hill. One morning, while I was attending to my own affairs, I was aware of Stevenson craning intently out of a side window and watching something. Presently he turned with a radiant countenance and the thrill of happiness in his voice to bid me come and watch too. A group of girl children were playing with the skipping-rope a few yards down the lane. "Was there ever such heavenly sport? Had I ever seen anything so beautiful? Kids and a skipping-rope—most of all that blessed youngest kid with the broken nose who didn't know how to skip

—nothing in the whole wide world had ever made him half so happy in his life before." Scarce any one else would have given a second look or thought to the little scene; but while it lasted it held him thus entranced in the eagerness of observation, and exclaiming through all the gamut of superlatives. From such superlatives, corresponding to the ardour and intensity of his being, his talk at all times derived much of its colour. During ill-health, had he a day or an hour of respite, he would gleefully proclaim himself a balmy being and a bird of Paradise. Did anything in life or literature please him, it was for the moment inimitably and incomparably the most splendid and wonderful thing in the whole world, and he must absolutely have you think so too—unless, indeed, you chose to direct his sense of humour against his own exaggerations, in which case he would generally receive your criticism with ready assenting laughter. But not quite always, if the current of feeling was too strong. My wife reminds me of an incident in point, from the youthful time when he used to make her the chief confidante of his troubles and touchstone of his tastes. One day he came to her with an early, I think the earliest, volume of poems by Mr. Robert Bridges, the present poet-laureate, in his hand; declared here was the most wonderful new genius, and enthusiastically read out to her some of the contents in evidence; till becoming aware that they were being coolly received, he leapt up crying, "My God! I believe you don't like them," and flung the book across the room and himself out of the house in a paroxysm of disappoint-

ment—to return a few hours later and beg pardon humbly for his misbehaviour. But for some time afterwards, whenever he desired her judgment on work of his own or others, he would begin by bargaining: "You won't *Bridges* me this time, will you?" Sometimes, indeed, when he meant something stronger even than usual, he would himself disarm the critic, and at the same time heighten his effect, by employing a figure not of exaggeration but of humorous diminution, and would cover the intensity of his feeling by expressing it in some perfectly colourless, flat hack phrase. You would propose something you knew he was red-hot to do, and he would reply, his eyes flashing with anticipation, "Well, yes, he could bring himself to do that without a pang": or he would describe the horrors of a visit to the dentist or of a formal tea-party (to one or two of which he was about this time lured), by admitting that it hadn't been quite all his fancy painted it; which you knew meant a degree of tribulation beyond superlatives.

Nothing proved to my mind Stevenson's true vocation to literature, or encouraged me more to push him under the notice of editors, than the way in which he exercised from the first a firm artistic control over his own temperament, suppressing his tendency to exaggerations and superlatives and practising a deliberate moderation of statement and lenity of style. This was very apparent when the little scene outside our lodging-house window, mingling in memory with the pleasure he had lately experienced at Mentone in watching the staggering evolutions of his Russian

baby friend Nelitchka, suggested to him the essay, "Notes on the Movements of Young Children," which was printed in the *Portfolio* (then edited by Philip Gilbert Hamerton) for the following August. The little paper, which he did not think worth reprinting in his life-time but is to be found in the posthumous editions, seemed to me an extraordinarily promising effort at analytic description half-humorous, half-tender—and promising above all in as far as it proved how well, while finding brilliantly effective expression for the subtlety of vital observation which was one part of his birthright, he could hold in check the tendency to emotional stress and vehemence which was another. This was in itself a kind of distinction in an age when so many of our prose-writers, and those the most attractive and impressive to youth, as Carlyle, Macaulay, Ruskin, Dickens, were men who, for all their genius, lacked or did not seek the special virtues of restraint and lenity of style, but were given, each after his manner, to strenuous emphasis, to splendid over-colouring and over-heightening: dealers in the purple patch and the insistent phrase, the vehement and contentious assertion.

The next scene which comes up with a special vividness in my memory dates, I think, from a year or two later. Of very young children his love was not, as I have said, always at once returned by them; but over growing boys of whatever class or breeding his spell was apt to be instantaneous. City arabs felt it just as much as any others. One day, as he and I had just come out from a meditative stroll

through St. Paul's Cathedral, we found ourselves near a little ragged troop of such. With one of his characteristic smiles, full of love and mischief, he immediately, at a first glance, seemed to establish a roguish understanding with them. They grinned back and closed about him and clung to him as we walked, fastening eager looks on his, held and drawn by they knew not what expectation : no, not by the hope of coppers, but by something more human—more divine, if you like to put it so—that had beamed upon their poor little souls from his looks. The small crowd of them kept growing and still surrounding us. As it was impossible for him at that place and moment practically to provide adventure or entertainment for them, it became a little difficult to know what to do. At last I solved the situation tamely, by calling a hansom cab and carrying my friend off in it. More by token, that same hansom horse, I remember, presently got the bit between his teeth and bolted for some half a mile along the Thames Embankment; and while I sat with stiffened knees and nerves on the stretch, expecting a smash, I could see that Stevenson actually enjoyed it. Few of us, chiefly because the build of the vehicle kept the driver's hands and hold upon the reins out of sight, were ever truly happy in a bolting hansom; but Stevenson was so made that any kind of danger was a positive physical exhilaration to him.

Of the visits which he paid to me at Cambridge in these years, the retrospect has again generalized itself for the most part into vagueness, a mere abstract sense of forgotten talk ranging from the most red-

blooded human to the airiest elfin. One impression which was always strong upon him there, and I think is recorded somewhere in his letters, is the profound difference between these English universities, with their beauty and dignity of aspect, their venerable college buildings and fair avenues and gardens, and anything which exists in Scotland, where residential colleges form no part of university life. Such surroundings used to affect him with a sense almost of unreality, as something romantically pleasurable but hardly credible; and this sense came most strongly upon him when I left him alone for some days in occupation of my rooms, with gyps and porters at his beck, while I went off on business elsewhere. Of personal relations which he formed there the only one I specially remember was with that interesting character, the late A. G. Dew-Smith. Dew-Smith, or Dew, as his friends called him for short, was a man of fine tastes and of means to gratify them. As a resident master of arts he helped the natural science departments by starting and superintending a workshop for manufacturing instruments of research of the most perfect make and finish; and he was one of the most skilful of photographers, alike in the scientific and artistic uses of the craft—a certain large-scale carbon print he took of Stevenson to my mind comes nearer to the original in richness of character and expression than any other portrait. He was a collector of rare prints and other treasures, including precious stones, of which in their uncut state he would sometimes pull a handful out of his pocket to show us. He was tall, with finely

cut features, black silky hair and neatly pointed beard, and withal a peculiarly soft and silken, deliberate manner of speech. Considerable were our surprise and amusement when some dozen years later we found his outward looks and bearing, and particularly his characteristic turns of speech, with something of dangerous power which his presence suggested as lying behind so much polished blandness, evoked and idealized by Stevenson in his creation of the personage of Attwater in that grimmest of island stories, *The Ebb Tide*. In telling anything of special interest that had happened to himself, Dew-Smith had a trick of avoiding the first person singular, and instead of saying "I did" or "I felt" so and so would say abstractly in the third, "one did" or "one felt." This scrupulous manner of non-egotism, I remember, came with specially odd effect when one day he was telling us how an official at a railway station had been offensively rude to him. "What did you do?" he was asked, and replied in a deprecating voice, "Well, you know, one had to put him through the door-panels." It is this aspect of Dew-Smith's character which no doubt suggested, although it did not really much resemble, the ruthless task-master, the man of stern Calvinistic doctrine and iron fatalism, who is the other half of Stevenson's Attwater.

Stevenson has interpreted the aspects and the thrill of out-door nature as magically as anyone in written words, but was not prone to talk about them. "No human being ever spoke of scenery for above two minutes at a time," he declares in his essay on *Talk*

and Talkers; and I cannot remember that he used ever to say much about the forest of Fontainebleau or the other scenes in France which he loved so well and frequented so much in these years, or even about those excursions which he was busy turning to such happy literary account in *An Inland Voyage* and *Travels with a Donkey*. Literature and human life were ever his main themes; including sometimes, but of course with his closest intimates only, the problems of his own life. By and by such intimates became aware that these problems had taken on a new and what might easily have turned into a tragical complexity. He had been for some time in the habit of frequenting the artist haunts of the Fontainebleau forest in the company of his cousin Bob Stevenson, for the sake of health and ease of mind and of the open-air life and congenial irresponsible company he found there. In those haunts it presently became apparent he had met his fate. To escape from hopeless conjugal troubles, a Mrs. Strong from California, we learnt, had come and for the time being settled there with her daughter and young son. She was some dozen years older than Stevenson, but fate had destined them for each other, and their momentary mutual attraction soon settled—for each was as far as possible from being a light-o'-love—into the unbreakable bond of a life-time. After a while the lady had to return to California, and there sought and was able to obtain freedom by divorce. Stevenson had promptly followed her, saying nothing of his intention to his parents, who he knew would disapprove it, and trusting

wholly to the meagre resources he was in those days able to command by his pen. Then followed for those of us who loved him and were in the secret a period of sore anxiety. There reached us from time to time scanty news of his discomforts undergone in the emigrant ship and train, and of his dangerous and complicated illnesses afterwards, and evidences withal of his indomitable will and courage in the shape of new tales and essays composed for his livelihood in circumstances under which any less resolute spirit must have sunk. Reconciled with his parents after a while by the fact of his marriage, he brought his wife home to them in the late summer of 1880. She made an immediate conquest of them, especially of that character so richly compounded between the stubborn and the tender, the humorous and the grim, his father. Thenceforth there was always at Louis's side a wife for his friends to hold only second in affection to himself. A separate biography of her by her sister has lately appeared, giving, along with many interesting details of her early life, a picture of her on the whole softer and less striking than that which I personally retain. Strength and staunchness were, as I saw her, her ruling qualities; strength and staunchness not indeed masculine in their kind, but truly womanly. Against those of his friends who might forget or ignore the precautions which his health demanded she could be a dragon indeed; but the more considerate among them she made warmly her own and was ever ready to welcome. Deep and rich capacities were in her, alike for tragedy and humour;

all her moods, thoughts, and instincts were vividly genuine and her own, and her daily talk, like her letters, was admirable both for play of character and feeling and for choice and colour of words. On those who knew the pair first after their marriage her personality impressed itself almost as vividly as his; and in my own mind his image lives scarce more indelibly than that of the small, dark-complexioned, eager, devoted woman his mate. In spite of her squareish build she was supple and elastic in all her movements; her hands and feet were small and beautifully modelled, though not meant for, or used to, idleness; the head, under its crop of close-waving thick black hair, was of a build and character that somehow suggested Napoleon, by the firm setting of the jaw and the beautifully precise and delicate modelling of the nose and lips: the eyes were full of sex and mystery as they changed from fire or fun to gloom or tenderness; and it was from between a fine pearly set of small teeth that there came the clear metallic accents of her intensely human and often quaintly individual speech.

The journey to California, with its risks and hardships, had had results as damaging to Stevenson's health as they were needful and fruitful for his happiness. After his return in the late summer of 1880 it was under much more positively invalid conditions than before that his friends found themselves obliged to seek his company. My chief special recollections of him during the next few years date almost entirely from places where he had gone in hopes of recovery or respite from his complicated and crippling troubles

of nerve, artery and lung. Just as little as the restrictions of the sick-room, galling to him above all men, had power to hinder his industry and success as a writer, so little did they impair his charm as a talker when he was allowed to talk at all. Occasionally, and oftener as time went on, hæmorrhages from the lung, or the immediate threat of them, enforced upon him periods of absolute silence, during which he could only communicate on paper with those about him, writing with blotting-pad against his knees as he lay in his red flannel dressing-gown propped against pillows in his bed. But in the intervals of respite his friends had the happiness of finding life and letters and art, experience and the possibilities of experience, once more irradiated for them as vividly as before, or even more vividly yet, in the glow and magic of his conversation.

For the first two years after his return Stevenson spent the winters (1880–81, 1881–82) at the Swiss mountain station of Davos, which had just begun to come into repute as a place of cure, and the summers at one resort or another in the bracing climate of the Scottish Highlands. The Davos of 1880, approached by a laborious seven hours' sledge-drive and vastly different from the luxurious and expanded Davos of to-day, consisted of the old Swiss village of Davos-Platz, clustered round its high-spired church, with one central group of German hotels in or close adjoining the village, and another smaller but more scattered group of English hotels at a little distance beside the open road in the direction of the minor village of Davos-Dorf. The

Stevenson quarters for this first winter were at the Hotel Belvedere, then a mere miniature nucleus of its latter-day self. I shall never forget his first reception of me there. It was about Christmas, 1880; I arrived late; and the moment dinner was over he had me out and up a short hill at the back of the hotel. There had only lately fallen enough snow to allow the sport of tobogganing to be started: there was a steep zigzag run down from a hut on the hill to near the hotel: he got me into the toboggan by moonlight, we started down the run, capsized at a corner, rolled over and over with our mouths and pockets full of snow, and walked home in tearing spirits. Nothing could have been more like him, and nothing (of course) much worse for him. My impression of the next few weeks at Davos is one of high tension of the soul and body in that tingling mountain air, under the iron moonlit frosts or the mid-day dazzle of the snow-fields; of the haunting sense of tragedy (of one tragedy in especial which touched us both to the heart) among that company, for the most part doomed or stricken, with faces tanned by sun and frost into masks belying their real plight: of endless bouts of eager, ever courteous give-and-take over the dark Valtellina wine between Stevenson and John Addington Symonds, in whom he had found a talker almost as charming as himself, exceeding him by far in range and accuracy of knowledge and culture, as was to be expected in the author of the *History of the Renaissance in Italy*, but nothing like his match, I thought, in essential sanity of human judgment or in the power of illumination by unfore-

seeable caprices of humour and fantasy. The reader can if he pleases turn to Stevenson's own impression of these conversations, whether as generalized afterward in the essay *Talk and Talkers*, where Symonds figures as Opalstein, or as set down in a letter at the time :—" I like Symonds very well, though he is much, I think, of an invalid in mind and character. But his mind is interesting, with many beautiful corners, and his consumptive smile very winning to see. We have had some good talks ; one went over Zola, Balzac, Flaubert, Whitman, Christ, Handel, Milton, Sir Thomas Browne ; do you see the *liaison ?*—in another, I, the Bohnist, the un-Grecian, was the means of his conversion in the matter of the Ajax." It is interesting to compare with these words Symonds's own retrospect on the same days and talks written six years after Stevenson's death : " I have never lived in Davos a better time than I lived then ; it has been so full of innocent jollity and beautiful Bohemianism, so sweetened by the strong clear spirit of that unique sprite whom all the world claims for its own now—R. L. Stevenson. . . . So gracious and so pure a light has never fallen upon my path as fell from his fantastic and yet intensely human genius—the beautiful companionship of the Shelley-like man, the eager, gifted wife, and the boy for whom they both thought in all their ways and hours."

Neither from the first of the two Highland summers nor the second Alpine winter do I retain any impressions as strong and definite as those I have last set down, though I was with him for a part of both, and

though the August and September weeks of 1881 at Braemar were marked by the excitement of the first conception and discussion of the tale of *The Sea-Cook*, which afterward developed into *Treasure Island*. They were remarkable also for the disgust of the patient at being condemned to wear a specially contrived and hideous kind of pig's-snout respirator for the inhalation of pine-oil, as related in a well known rhyming letter of the time to Henley. But from the second Highland summer dates another vivid recollection. While his wife remained with his parents at Edinburgh, I spent two or three weeks of radiant weather alone with him in the old hotel at Kingussie in Inverness-shire. He had little strength either for work or exercise but managed to draft the tale *The Treasure of Franchard*, and rejoiced in lying out for hours at a time half stripped in the sun, nearly according to that manner of sun-bath since so much prescribed by physicians in Germany. The burn or mountain streamlet at the back of Kingussie village is for about a mile of its course after it leaves the moor one of the most varied and beautiful in Scotland, racing with a hundred little falls and lynns beside the margin of an enchanting fir-belted, green and dingled oval glade. The glade, alas, has long ago been invaded and annexed by golfers, enemies to peace ; and even the approaches to the burn from the village have, I understand, been ruined by the erection of a great modern distillery. But in the year 1882 we had these haunts to ourselves. Stevenson used to spend hours exploring the recesses of the burn's course, musing, sometimes with and

sometimes without speech, on its endless chances and caprices of eddy and ripple and back-set, its branchings and reunitings, alternations of race and pool, bustle and pause, and on the images of human life, free-will, and destiny presented by the careers of the sticks and leaves he found or launched upon its course. One result of these musings occurs in a dramatic scene familiar to all who have read his fragment, *The Great North Road*. Of other talk what I remember best is the entertainment with which he read for the first time Leigh Hunt's milk-and-water dilution of Dante in his poem *Francesca da Rimini* (or *Nimini-pimini* as Byron re-christened it), and of the laughing parodies which bubbled over from him on those passages of tea-party sentiment and cockney bathos that disfigure it. Some kind of play, too, I remember which he insisted on starting and keeping up, and wherein he invested his companion (that was me) with the imaginary character of a roystering blade in a white greatcoat and knobstick making scandal in the Highland village, and himself with that of a sedate and friendly burgess hard put to it to save me from the hands of the police.

The following winter took the Stevensons to the Provençal coast, but to haunts there at some distance from those he had known ten years ago. After some unsuccessful attempts to settle near Marseilles (Stevenson always loved the colour and character of that mighty Mediterranean and cosmopolitan trading-port), they were established by March, 1884, in the Châlet la Solitude on the hill behind Hyères; and on that charming site he enjoyed the best months of health

and happiness he ever knew, at least on the European continent. His various expressions in prose and verse of pleasure in his life there are well-known. For instance, the following from a letter to Mr. Gosse :— "This spot, our garden and our view, are sub-celestial. I sing daily with my Bunyan, that great bard,

'I dwell already the next door to Heaven!'

If you could see my roses, and my aloes, and my fig-marigolds, and my olives, and my view over a plain, and my view of certain mountains as graceful as Apollo, as severe as Zeus, you would not think the phrase exaggerated." One or two sets of verses dallying with the notion that here might be his permanent home and anchorage have only lately been published. I give another set written in a somewhat homelier strain, which I think has not yet found its way into print :—

My wife and I, in our romantic cot,
The world forgetting, by the world forgot,
High as the gods upon Olympus dwell,
Pleased with the things we have, and pleased as well
To wait in hope for those which we have not.

She burns in ardour for a horse to trot;
I pledge my votive powers upon a yacht;
Which shall be first remembered, who can tell—
My wife or I?

Harvests of flowers o'er all our garden-plot
She dreams; and I to enrich a darker spot,
My unprovided cellar; both to swell
Our narrow cottage huge as a hotel,
That portly friends may come and share our lot—
My wife and I.

The first friend to come was one not physically corresponding to the adjective, namely myself. It was the moment when the Southern spring was in its first flush and freshness, and the days and evenings sped gloriously. Everything, down to the *dêche* or money pinch to which recent expenses had reduced him, or the misdeeds of the black Skye-terrier Woggs, the most engaging, petted, ill-conducted and cajoling little thorough-bred rascal of his race, was turned by Stevenson into a matter of abounding delight or diversion. No schemes of work could for the time being seem too many or too arduous. A flow of verse, more continuous and varied than ever before, had set in from him. Besides many occasional pieces expressing intimate moods of the moment with little care or finish, and never intended for any eye but his own, those of the special *Child's Garden* series were nearly completed; and they and their dedication, as in duty bound, to his old nurse Alison Cunningham had to be canvassed between us. So had a much more arduous matter, the scheme and style of *Prince Otto*, its general idea having gradually, under much discussion, been evolved from an earlier one where the problems and characters would have been similar but the setting and date Oriental and remote. So had a scheme to be put in hand next after that, namely, a new tale for boys; this time a historical tale, which duly took shape as *The Black Arrow*, to be slighted later on, quite unjustly as I have always thought, by its author and his family as "tushery."

One day, looking from one of the hill terraces from

near his house at the group of islets (the isles of Hyères) in the offing, we had let our talk wander to famous and more distant archipelagoes of the same inland sea. I spoke of the likeness in unlikeness which strikes the traveller between the noble outlines and colours of the Ionian group, as they rise facing the coasts of Acarnania, Elis, and Epirus, and those of the group of the Inner Hebrides over against the shores of Ross and Argyleshire. We ran over the blunt monosyllabic names of some of the Hebridean group—Coll, Mull, Eigg, Rum, Muck, and Skye—and contrasted them with the euphonious Greek sounds, Leucadia, Cephalonia, Ithaca, Zante or Zacynthos ("Jam medio apparet fluctu nemorosa Zacynthos" had for some unaccountable reason been Stevenson's favourite line of Virgil from boyhood, and he goes out of his way to make occasion for one of his characters to quote it in almost the latest of his sea-tales, *The Ebb Tide*). And we speculated on a book to be written that should try to strike the several notes of these two island regions, of their scenery, inhabitants, and traditions, of Greek and Gaelic lay and legend, and the elements of Homeric and Ossianic poetry. I think the idea was no bad one, and that perhaps such a book has still to be, and will some day be, written. But Stevenson, with his lack of Greek and of the Greek scholar's special enthusiasm, and the unlikelihood of his being able to work much in libraries, would perhaps hardly have been the man to attempt it. Nevertheless, having frequented the Hebrides group and drunk in its romance from youth in the lighthouse yacht, and again on a

special excursion with Sir Walter Simpson in 1874, he was much attracted by the scheme. And when some eight months later, by what I believe was a pure coincidence, he received a proposal from a firm of publishers that he should take a cruise in the Greek archipelago with a view to a volume that should tell of his experiences in a manner something like that of his former small volumes of travel in France, our talk of the spring, recurring to him, made him take warmly to the notion. He wrote to me at once on the question of introductions, and went to Nice, partly to make inquiries about Mediterranean steam-packets and partly to ask medical advice. The latter confirmed, I believe, what was the judgment of his wife that the risks of the trip would be too great; and the idea was dropped.

In my next glimpse of him there were elements of comedy. I had gone for a few weeks' travel in Southern Italy, and meaning to return by sea and across France from Naples, with a very short time to spare before I was due back in London, had asked the Stevensons if they would come and meet me for a day or so at Marseilles. They came, and it was a happy meeting. But I discovered that I had miscalculated travelling expenses and had not enough cash in hand to finish my homeward journey. He found himself in the proud position of being able to help me, but only at the cost of leaving his own pockets empty. He had to remain in Marseilles until I could reimburse him from Paris, and amused himself with some stanzas in honour of the place and the occasion:—

"Long time I lay in little ease
Where, paced by the Turanian,
Marseilles, the many-masted, sees
The blue Mediterranean.

Now songful in the hour of sport,
Now riotous for wages,
She camps around her ancient port,
An ancient of the ages.

Algerian airs through all the place
Unconquerably sally;
Incomparable women pace
The shadows of the alley.

And high o'er dock and graving-yard
And where the sky is paler,
The Golden Virgin of the Guard
Shines, beckoning the sailor.

She hears the city roar on high,
Thief, prostitute, and banker:
She sees the masted vessels lie
Immovably at anchor.

She sees the snowy islets dot
The sea's immortal azure,
And If, that castellated spot,
Tower, turret and embrazure.

Here Dantès pined; and here to-day
Behold me his successor:
For here imprisoned long I lay
In pledge for a professor!" *

* In the recent volume, "New Poems," this little piece has unluckily been published with the misprints "placed" for "paced" in the first stanza, "as" for "an" in the second, and "dark" for "dock" in the fourth; the last stanza, which gives the whole its only point and *raison d'être*, being left out. The allusions concerning Dantès and the Chateau d'If point, of course, to the *Monte Cristo* of the elder Dumas.

Seven or eight months later a violent and all but fatal return of illness dashed the high hopes which had been raised by the happy Provençal spring and summer. An epidemic of cholera following made him leave the Mediterranean shore for good and sent him home to England. He arrived to all appearance and according to almost all medical prognostics a confirmed and even hopeless invalid. His home for the next three years was at Bournemouth. He was subject to frequent hæmorrhages from the lung, any of which might have proved fatal and which had to be treated with styptic remedies of the strongest and most nerve-shaking kind. Much of his life was spent on the sofa, much in that kind of compulsory silence which up till now had at worst been only occasional. Now and again a few weeks of respite enabled him to make cautious excursions, once as far as Paris, once to Matlock, once or more on my invitation to Cambridge, but oftenest to London. Here his resort was not to hotels, but as an ever-welcome guest to the official house I had lately come to inhabit within the gates of the British Museum. His industry, maintained against harder conditions than ever, showed itself all the more indomitable and at last had its reward. The success of *Treasure Island* published before he left Hyères, was by the time he settled at Bournemouth beginning to make his name a popular one. Two and a half years later *Jekyll and Hyde* raised it suddenly into resounding fame, and was immediately followed by *Kidnapped* which was by common consent acclaimed as the best Scotch tale since the

Waverleys. For part of the Bournemouth time he was also much engaged in joint work with Henley on the plays *Admiral Guinea*, *Beau Austin*, and *Macaire*: and upon this, the lustiest and not always the most considerate of guests and collaborators, Mrs. Stevenson found herself compelled in the interest of her husband's health to lay restrictions which were resented, and sowed the first seeds, I think, of that estrangement at heart of Henley from his friend so lamentably proclaimed by him in public after Stevenson's death.

Ill as he was in these years, Stevenson was able to bind to himself in close friendship not a few new-comers, including two eminent Americans, Henry James and the painter J. S. Sargent. I went down myself from time to time, and enjoyed his company not less, only with more of anxiety and misgiving, than of old. Sargent's little picture showing him indescribably lean in his velvet jacket as he paces to and fro twirling his moustache with one hand and holding his cigarette in the other as he talks—St. Gaudens's bronze relief of him propped on pillows on the sofa (the latter a work done two or three years later in America)—these tally pretty closely in their different ways with the images I carry in my mind of his customary looks and attitudes in those Bournemouth days. Always except once I found him as cheerful as ever, and as vivid a focus of cheerfulness. The sole exception remains deeply printed on my memory. I had followed him from the house into the garden; he was leaning with his back to me looking out from the garden gate; as he

heard me approach, he turned round upon me a face such as I never saw on him save that once—a face of utter despondency, nay tragedy, upon which seemed stamped for one concentrated moment the expression of all he had ever had, or might yet have, in life to suffer or to renounce. Such a countenance was not to be accosted, and I left him. During his visits to my house at the British Museum—" the many-pillared and the well-beloved," as he calls it in the well-known set of verses, as though the keepers' houses stood within the great front colonnade of the museum, which they do not, but project in advance of it on either flank —during such visits he never showed anything but the old charm and high courage and patience. He was able to enjoy something of the company of famous seniors who came seeking his acquaintance, as Browning, Lowell, Burne-Jones. With such visitors I usually left him alone, and have at any rate no detailed notes or memories of conversations held by him with them in my presence. What I remember most vividly was how one day I came in from my work and found the servants, who were devoted to him, waiting for me in the hall with scared faces. He had had a worse hæmorrhage than usual, and lay propped on his pillows in his red dressing-gown with pencil in hand and foolscap paper against his knees. He greeted me with finger on lip and a smile half humorous half ruefully deprecating, as though in apology for being so troublesome a guest; handing me at the same time a sheet on which he had written the words from Falstaff, " 'Tis my vocation, Hal." Then, with a changed

look of expectant curiosity and adventure, he wrote, "Do you think it will *faucher* me this time?" (French *faucher*, to mow down, to kill, make an end of.) I forget how the conversation, spoken on my side, written on his, went on. With his intimates and those of his household he held many such, and it would have been interesting to keep the sheets on which his side of the talk, often illustrated with comic sketches, was set down. So would it have been interesting to keep another record of the same illness, namely the little lumps or pats of modellers' wax which he asked me to get for him and with which, when he could not talk, read or write, he amused himself moulding tiny scenes with figures and landscapes in relief. These were technically childish, of course, but had always, like the woodcuts done to amuse his stepson at Davos, a touch of lively expressiveness and character. Some dozens of them, I remember, he finished, but no vestige of them remains. They were put into a drawer, dried, cracked, and were thrown away.

My next vision of him is the last, and shows him as he stood with his family looking down upon me over the rail of the outward-bound steamship *Ludgate Hill* while I waved a parting hand to him from a boat in the Thames by Tilbury Dock. From our first meeting in Suffolk until his return with his wife from California in 1880 had been one spell of seven years. From that return until his fresh departure in 1887 had been another. Now followed the winter spent at Saranac Lake in the Adirondack mountains; the two years and odd months of cruising among the

various archipelagoes of the Pacific—the Marquesas, the Paumotus, the Society Islands, the Sandwich group, Samoa, the Gilberts again, the Marshalls. The lure of the South Seas and the renewed capacity for out-door life and adventure he found in himself during these voyagings had gradually forced upon both Stevenson and his wife the conclusion that there was but one thing for him to do, and that was to settle somewhere in the Pacific for good. He had written as much to his friends in England, telling them at the same time of the property he had bought in Samoa and on which he proposed to build himself a home. Several earlier letters which would have prepared us for this news had miscarried, so that when the announcement came it was a rude shock to those who loved him and were looking forward eagerly to his return At Sydney, in August, 1890, he received our replies. Mine was of a tenor which cut the warm hearts of both the pair to the quick, although not serving to deflect their purpose. In spite of the fine work he had done during his voyages, I persuaded myself that from living permanently in that outlandish world and far from cultivated society both he and his writing must deteriorate, and wrote warning him as much in plain terms. Translating unconsciously my own need and desire for his company into a persuasion that mine was needed, as of old, for criticism and suggestion to him in his work, and that he no longer valued it, I wrote reproachfully, pleading against and prophesying evil from his purpose. He and his wife both set themselves then and there to justify their

decision in letters of which, reverting to them now after thirty years, I find the terms infinitely touching and too sacred almost to quote. Referring to one of his recent cruises, Stevenson says :—

We had a very delightful voyage for some part ; it would have been delightful to the end had my health held out. That it did not, I attribute to savage hard work in a wild cabin heated like the Babylonian furnace, four plies of blotting-paper under my wet hand and the drops trailing from my brow. For God's sake don't start in to blame Fanny : often enough she besought me not to go on : but I did my work while I was a bedridden worm in England, and please God I shall do my work until I burst. I do not know any other virtue that I possess ; and indeed there are few others I prize alongside of it. Only, one other I have : I love my friends, and I don't like to hear the most beloved of all casting doubt on that affection. Did you not get the verses I sent you from Apemama ? I guess they were not A1 verses, but they expressed something you surely could not doubt.* But perhaps all my letters have miscarried ? A sorrow on correspondence ! If this miscarry too ? See here : if by any chance this should come to your hand, understand once and for all that since my dear wild noble father died no head on earth is more precious to my thoughts than yours. . . . But all this talk is useless. Know this, I love you, and since I am speaking plainly for once, I bind it upon you as a sacred duty, should you be dangerously ill, I must be summoned. I will never forgive you if I am not. So long as there is no danger, I do well, do I not ?—to consider conditions necessary to my work and health. I have a charge of souls ; I keep many eating and drinking ; my continued life has a value of its own ; and I cannot but feel it. But I have to see you again. That is sure. And—how strangely we are made !—I see no harm in my

* These are the verses "To S. C." afterwards printed as No. XXXVI in the volume *Songs of Travel*. In point of fact the package containing them had for the time being failed to reach me.

dying like a burst pig upon some outlandish island, but if you died, without due notice and a chance for me to see you, I should count it a disloyalty.

Here Stevenson's hand has failed and his wife takes up the letter, and in many urgent, not less affectionate phrases continues to enforce his plea :—

Dear Custodian,—

I hardly dare use that word with the knowledge in my heart that we intend to remove our bodily selves from out your custody, but as you know it will be our vile bodies only ; spiritually we are yours and always shall be. Neither time nor space can change us in that. You told me when we left England if we found a place where Louis was really well to stay there. It really seems that anywhere in the South Seas will do. Ever since we have been here we have been on the outlook for a spot that combines the most advantages. In some way I preferred the Marquesas, the climate being perfect and the natives people that I admired and loved. The only suitable place on the Sandwich islands is at the foot of a volcano where we should have to live upon black lava and trust to rain for water. Besides I could not bear the white population. All things considered, Samoa took our fancy the most ; there are three opportunities each month to communicate with England by telegraph from Auckland, Auckland being from seven to eight days' steam distance from us. You could hardly believe your own eyes if you could see Louis in his present state of almost rude health, no cough, no hæmorrhage, no night sweats. He rides and walks as much as he likes without any fatigue, and in fact lives the life of a man who is well. I tremble when I think of a return to England.

He never returned to England, and a third spell of seven years in his life had just been completed when on one gloomy, gusty, sodden December day in 1894, I came down from lunching with Sir Harry Johnston,

the African traveller and administrator, in the upper floor of a Government office in Westminster, and saw newspaper posters flapping dankly in the street corners, with the words "Death of R. L. Stevenson" printed large upon them. The Pacific voyages and the island life had, or seemed to have, effectually healed his troubles of nerve, throat, and lung; but the old arterial weakness remained, and after so many years of unsparing mental toil the bursting of a blood-vessel in his brain had laid him low at the critical moment of his fully ripening power.

During that third and last period the day-dreams of the Mentone days had after all and in spite of all and against all likelihood been realized for him. Fame as a writer even beyond his aspirations had come to be his. Of voyagings in far-off oceans, of happy out-door activities and busy beneficent responsibilities in romantic circumstances and outlandish scenes, he had had his fill. Withal his love of his old friends had amid his new experiences and successes never weakened. Of this no one had ampler or more solid proofs than I. That amidst all his other absorbing interests, and in spite of his ever-growing passion and assiduity in literary work, he should never once have failed in sending off to me his regular full budget of a monthly letter, either written with his own hand or dictated to his step-daughter, would have been proof enough in itself of such steadfastness. On the side of his friends at home, speaking at least for myself, I fear that our joy in the news of his returning strength and activity had been tempered by something of latent jealousy

that so much good could befall him without help of ours and at a distance of half the world away from us. I know that I was inclined to be hypercritical about the quality and value of some of the work sent home from the Pacific. I thought the series of papers afterwards arranged into the volume *In the South Seas* overloaded with information and the results of study, and disappointingly lacking in the thrill and romance one expected of him in relating experiences which had realized the dream of his youth. (I ought to mention that a far better qualified judge, Mr. Joseph Conrad, differs from me in this, and even prefers *In the South Seas* to *Treasure Island*, principally for the sake of what he regards as a very masterpiece of native portraiture in the character of Tembinok, King of Apemama.)

Again, I thought it a pity that Stevenson should spend so much toil in setting out, in the volume *A Footnote to History*, the details of certain complicated, very remote and petty recent affairs in which none except perhaps a few international diplomatists could well be expected to take interest. Of his work in fiction dealing with the islands, I thought most of *The Wrecker* below his mark, and *The Ebb Tide*, at least the first half of it, a comparatively dull and rather brutal piece of realism. True, these were collaboration pieces; and of island stories there was *The Beach of Falesà*, and of Scottish tales *Catriona*, which were all his own and of which the quality should have fully re-assured one (the master-fragment *Weir of Hermiston* was of course unknown to us till after

his death). But thinking as I did, I said so in my letters with the old frankness, causing him for once a shade of displeasure: for he wrote to me that I was being a little too Cockney with him, and to a common friend that I was getting to be something of an auld wife with my criticisms. Well, well, perhaps I was, perhaps not. But at any rate I have proof in full measure that his affection for and memory of me survived and underwent no change. One such proof, scarce less surprising than endearing, came to me but the other day, long after his death, in the shape of a bulky packet sent to me by his representatives in America. On opening the packet I found that it contained almost the whole mass of my letters written to him from the beginning of our friendship to the end. Considering the vagrant habits of his youth, his long dislike of and detachment from all the ordinary *impedimenta* of life, his frequent changes of abode even after marriage and success had made of him a comparatively settled and propertied man—considering these things, that he should have cumbered himself by the preservation of so bulky a correspondence was a thing to me naturally undreamed of and when discovered infinitely touching. As concerns my regard and regret for him, —there has been hardly a day in the thirty and odd years since he left us on which I, like others who loved him, have not missed him. His cousin Bob Stevenson, in some gifts and brilliancies almost his match, used to vow that the chief interest of anything which happened was to hear what Louis would say about it. World-events in war and politics and mankind's

material experiments and physical conquests in the last few years have been too tremendous in themselves for so much to be said of any man without absurdity. But want him and long for him one does, to hear him talk both of them and of a thousand lesser things: most of all perhaps of those writers who have stepped into fame since his time. If we could have him back among us, as one sometimes has him in day-dreams, how we, his old friends and comrades in letters—but alas! with what gaps among us, Henry James gone, Andrew Lang gone, and so many others—how would we make haste to gather about him: and when we had had our turn, how eagerly would he look round for the younger fellow-craftsmen, Sir James Barrie, Mr. Kipling—not now indeed so young—whose promise he had recognized and with whom in his last years he had exchanged greetings across the ocean. Of those who had not begun to publish before he died the man I imagine him calling for first of all is the above-mentioned Mr. Conrad. Some time about 1880–90 these two seafarers, the Polish gentleman turned British merchant-skipper and the ocean-loving author cruising far and wide in search of health, might quite well have met in life, only that the archipelago of Mr. Conrad's chief experiences was the Malay, that of Stevenson's the Polynesian. Could my dream be fulfilled, how they would delight in meeting now. What endless ocean and island yarns the two would exchange; how happily they would debate the methods and achievements of their common art; and how difficult it would be to part them! As I let myself

imagine such meeting, I know not which of the two presences is the more real and near to me, yours, my good friend Conrad, whom I hope and mean to greet in the flesh to-morrow or the next day or the next, or that of Stevenson, since my last sight of whom, as he waved good-bye to me from the deck of the "Ludgate Hill," I know as a fact of arithmetic, but can in no other sense realize, that there has passed a spell of no less than four-and-thirty years or the life-time of a whole generation.

CHAPTER IX

FLEEMING AND ANNE JENKIN

Among the very few seniors of note or standing in Edinburgh who had seen the promise that lay under Stevenson's questionable, to some eyes merely rakish, outside in youth were Fleeming Jenkin, the professor of mechanical engineering, and his wife. The names of these two are not so famous as most of those to which I have a separate chapter in the present book. But alike by gift and character they were a very remarkable couple, each of them possessed of talents which in their several ways fell barely short of genius. Stevenson lived to repay the debt his youth had owed to the kindness and insight of these friends by writing a full biography of Jenkin, whom a chance blood-poisoning carried off suddenly and prematurely, in the mid exercise of unabated energies and the full glow of anticipated achievement. His widow survived him six and thirty years, dying but the other day and reducing almost below computation the number of those still living who can remember Stevenson in his youth.

The story of Fleeming Jenkin's life may be quickly told. He was born in 1833. By his father's side he

came of a Welsh stock settled in Kent; his mother, born in Jamaica of Scottish parentage, was a lady of talent and spirit, the author of novels which had a reputation in their day,—*Cousin Stella*, *Who Breaks Pays*, *Two French Marriages*, etc. Both these parents, dying at an unusual old age within a few hours of each other, our friend Fleeming had, when death overtook him, but lately carried to their graves. The experiences of his youth had been both varied and vivid. He was at school first at Jedburgh, then at Frankfort-on-the-Main, then in Paris, where he was an eager witness of the scenes of revolution in 1848. Thence he went to the University of Genoa, where he took a degree in 1850, and immediately afterwards began the practical business of his life in an engineer's workshop. One result of this cosmopolitan training on his exact and retentive mind was a life-long mastery, more thorough than that of most professing linguists, of the three chief European languages. Returning to England at eighteen, Jenkin worked for the next six years under several firms successively, chiefly at railway enterprises in England and abroad; next for several years, in connection with Sir William Thomson, at the manufacture, testing, and laying down of several of the great submarine telegraph lines. Thereafter he held, in English and European repute, a place as one of the first, both theoretically and practically, of living electrical engineers. In 1859 he had married the daughter of Alfred Austin, Esq., C.B., a lady sharing in full measure the gifts that have distinguished her family. From 1861 to 1868 he carried on a business

of his own in London, and in the latter year was called to the professorship of engineering at Edinburgh, having for two years already filled a corresponding chair at University College. At Edinburgh he continued to reside until his death : energetic and successful in teaching, indefatigable in invention and in the application of science to human necessities. For the last two years a large part—unhappily too large—of his energies was thrown into the working out of a system he had invented of cheap electrical transport, adapted especially for short distances and relatively light freights. This system be called " Telpherage," and believed ardently in its practical usefulness and future commercial importance. Presumably the effectual sagacity and foresight which had up till then distinguished his professional career had in this instance failed him, seeing that his invention, at least in the form in which he conceived it, has not, I learn, taken root. The anxiety and overwork involved in connection with it had somewhat shaken the ordinary robustness of his health ; but he seemed to have quite recovered, when a slight operation, for the remedy of a mischief not alarming, brought on the illness which snatched him suddenly from among us.

Of the main business of Jenkin's career as above stated, as well as of his vigorous and fruitful initiative in the matters of technical education, of the organization of sanitary inspection and reform, and the like, I speak with little understanding. But it was the secondary labours—the *πάρεργα*—of his life that impressed those of his friends who, like myself, could

only take other people's judgments on his main work, with so strong a sense of the extraordinary vigour and variety of his powers. You were always making the discovery of some new attainment or proficiency in him of which he would show no sign until the occasion for it naturally arose. There was no discussion in which he would not join, and no subject in which he did not take an interest; and such were his natural keenness of apprehension, and integrity and acuteness of judgment, that there seemed almost none on which he was not able to throw light. Attention was called not long after his death to the circumstance that out of four elaborate studies on subjects not especially his own, which he contributed to the *North British Review*, three were highly valued, and their conclusions cordially adopted, by the authors criticized, among whom were such masters in divers fields as the great naturalist Darwin and the great Latinist H. A. J. Munro. Sir Henry Irving, I always understood, was forward during Jenkin's lifetime to acknowledge the value of his private and published criticisms on stage-craft and the actor's art. The classical student who turns to his review of Browning's *Agamemnon* and Campbell's *Trachiniæ* in the *Edinburgh Review* for 1878 * will certainly not close it without a sense of added insight into the spirit and conduct of the Greek drama. On questions of art and literature this man of science and of inventions was singularly well worth hearing, though often one-sided and dogmatic. In art he valued

* Reprinted in *Papers of Fleeming Jenkin* (Longmans, 1887), p. 3.

above all the spirit of classic grace and beauty, but was sometimes taken in by its counterfeit. In imaginative literature he cared first for the force and reality of the human emotions expressed, next for the structure and evolution of the fable, and little, comparatively, for matters of form and style apart from these.

The variety and genuineness of Jenkin's intellectual interests proceeded in truth from the keenness and healthiness of his interest in life itself. Such keenness shone visibly from his looks, which were not handsome but in the highest degree animated, sparkling, and engaging, the very warts on his countenance seeming to heighten the vivacity of its expression. The amount of his vital energy was extraordinary, and no man ever took his own experience with more zest or entered with a readier sympathy into that of others. An honest blow he was always prepared to take, and every honest pleasure he relished with delight. He loved to do well all he did, and to take not only a part, but a lead, in bodily and other pastimes, as shooting, fishing, mountaineering, yachting, skating, dancing, acting and the rest. But in conversation and human intercourse lay perhaps his chief pleasure of all. His manly and loyal nature was at all times equally ready with a knock-down argument and a tear of sympathy. Chivalrous and tender-hearted in the extreme in all the real relations and probing circumstances of life, he was too free himself from small or morbid susceptibilities to be very sparing of them in others, and to those who met and talked with him for the first time might easily seem too trenchant in reply and too pertina-

cious in discussion. But you soon found out that if he was the most unflinching of critics and disputants, he was also the most unfailing and ever serviceable of friends. Moreover, to what pleased him in your company or conversation he was instantly and attractively responsive. He would eagerly watch for and pounce upon your remarks, and the futile or half-sincere among them he would toss aside with a prompt and wholesome contempt, his eye twinkling the while between humour, kindness, and annoyance; while on others he would seize with gusto, and turn them appreciatively over and inside out until he had made the most of them. In my own intercourse with him, no subject was more frequently discussed between us than the social advantages and disadvantages of scientific and mechanical discovery. I used to speak with dislike of the 'progress' and 'prosperity' which cause multitudes to teem in grimy alleys where before a few had been scattered over wholesome fields, and with apprehension of the possible results of his own last invention on population and on scenery. He would thereupon assail me as a puling sentimentalist: I would retort on him as a materialist and Philistine. In the course of discussion he would be forced to admit that the multiplication and dissemination of the *commoda vitæ* in the modern world was attended by the loss of much in life and nature that appealed to the imagination and the sense of beauty and romance. But he would always fall back on his standing argument that life, life under any even merely endurable conditions of health, freedom, and order, was well worth

living; and that the mere increase of human beings capable of enjoying the rudimentary pleasures and fulfilling the rudimentary duties of existence was therefore a real and solid, even if not unmixed, good. Did not his charity and buoyancy of temper lead him here to err in judging others by himself? If, indeed, any large proportion of those multitudes could be like him, in his untiring zest for life, for work, for truth, for experience, for the exercise of all family and human duties and benevolences, then indeed we could with him agree and believe that all was for the best. Be that as it may, his memory, as it abides with us after there has passed away a whole generation since his death, is more vivid and more inspiriting than are the living presences of the thinner-blooded and weaklier-souled majority of men.

His wife, as I have said, survived him until but the other day. His intense, assiduous devotion to her had been one of the qualities which had most endeared him to his friends. She came of a notable legal family, the Austins of Creeting Mill in Suffolk. The eldest of the three distinguished Austin brothers, John, gained world-wide fame as a philosophical jurist, and with his wife, one of the Norwich Taylors, was for many years the centre of the most brilliant legal society in London: that enchanting character, Lucie, Lady Duff Gordon, was their only child. After his early youth Suffolk knew John Austin no more. Charles, on the other hand, the second brother, who had been a contemporary at Cambridge of Macaulay and Cockburn, and one of the most dazzling of the

brilliant group to which they belonged, after rapidly making an unheard-of fortune at the Parliamentary bar, retired early with broken health to his native county and lived there a life of lettered leisure, undertaking no duty except that of chairman of quarter sessions: my father knew him in that capacity as a matter of course, but not intimately, and taught me to recognize him, but no more, when we met him driving about the countryside. The third brother, Alfred Austin, also a lawyer, was a man of less shining but nevertheless quite effectual gifts, and after a succession of public services became permanent Secretary of the Office of Works. His wife belonged to the highly cultivated Norwich stock of the Barrons. Mrs. Fleeming Jenkin was the daughter of this couple, and in mind as in character inherited both the powers and the standards of the distinguished breeds from which she sprang. Her own special gift was for acting and recitation. It was only privately exercised, but those of us who had the privilege of seeing and hearing her will never forget the experience. Her features were not beautiful, but had a signal range and thrilling power of expression. In tragic and poetic parts, especially in those translated or adapted from the Greek, she showed what, as I have already hinted, must needs, had it been publicly displayed, have been recognized as genius. To hear her declaim dramatic verse was to enjoy that art in its very perfection. And her gift of dramatic gesture was not less striking. Recalling her, for instance, in the part of Clytemnestra, I can vouch for having seen on no stage anything of

greater—on the English stage nothing of equal—power and distinction. Besides these and other figures of Greek tragedy, Mrs. Jenkin showed the versatility of her gift by playing with power and success such contrasted Shakespeare parts as Cleopatra, Katherine the shrew, Viola, Mrs. Ford, as well as, in other fields of drama, Griselda, Peg Woffington, and Mrs. Malaprop. Needless to say that Jenkin, who delighted both passionately and critically in everything his wife did and was, took especial pride and joy in these performances, and in getting them up was the most energetic and capable of stage managers, whether in the private theatre which he and his friends established for a while in Edinburgh (and in which the young Louis Stevenson occasionally bore a part), or on the rarer occasions when she was able to appear in London.

Of the wise and warm and perfectly unassuming private virtues of this admirable woman, her tactful human kindnesses and assiduities, constant and unfailing until the end, among her friends and descendants, the present is no place to speak. The affection with which Stevenson never ceased to regard her, the value he set upon her practical wisdom and advice as well as the zeal with which he bent himself to carry out the heavy task his friendship had undertaken in writing her husband's life—all these things are made manifest both in that Life itself and in his published letters written to her during his invalid years at Bournemouth.

CHAPTER X

BOX HILL AND GEORGE MEREDITH

Every Londoner knows Box Hill near Dorking, with its open crest and wide prospects and steep chalky declivities and gullies thicketed with juniper and box-wood. Through a fine act of private generosity, the crest, with its slopes and approaches from the high road and from the south-west, has now become the property of the National Trust and so been saved to the public in perpetuity, while some of the adjacent and no less attractive open country has, even as I write, been thrown into the market and is in danger of being parcelled out for building. It is true that of the ground now its own the public sometimes makes an irritating enough use, especially that portion of the public which regales itself on the open hill instead of at the inn below, and litters all the slopes and hollows with the wrappings and relics of its provender. Fortunately, no amount of Cockney frequentation can cancel or much disturb the inveterate associations of the scene with classical works and classical figures of English literature. Moreover, there are plenty of hours when those associations can still be conjured up and those memories enjoyed in quiet. It is six years and more since I chanced to spend the

evening of a chill autumnal day wandering alone about those familiar and haunted slopes. The weather had just cleared after storm: above the steep shoulder of the down a perfect half-moon hung in a sky of faint lilac melting into pure pearl-green: the darkened valley woods were of a deep misty brown touched here and there almost into crimson by the last lingering flames of autumn: the hills closing the valley south-westward stood purple and translucent like amethyst. The rich, solemnly glowing colours of the scene, with the tingling chill of the season, sent a thrill through my blood and nerves intensifying the memories and associations of the place almost into actual presences, hauntings with which the very air seemed to vibrate.

The earliest of such memories and associations personal to myself had been from days of my own later boyhood, when I used often to visit a family of girl-cousins who had their home in the valley a mile or two away towards Leatherhead, and for one of whom I cherished a mute and cubbish adoration. Other images, from fiction and from real life alternately, the one not less vivid than the other, rose and thrust themselves crowdingly upon my mind's eye. Had not Jane Austen made a certain imagined picnic on the site for ever memorable by the misbehaviour of her dear, her fascinating and fastidious, too-confident and too-managing Emma Woodhouse, whose cleverness led her into more blunders than a duller person could have committed, and who on the day of that picnic made poor Jane Fairfax so dreadfully unhappy by her flirtation with Frank Churchill? Looking across the

valley to the great park of Norbury or the more modest grounds of Camilla Lacey, did not the figure of the real and charming Fanny Burney, with her novels and her diaries and her friends, her marriage and married life with the most irreproachably correct of French noblemen in exile, rise up to occupy and animate the scene? For a crisis of human interest in a contrasted kind, a crowning moment in a red-blooded historic tale of passion and heroism and beauty, was it not here that Nelson and Emma Hamilton met and parted for the last time? Was it not here again that Keats, living for some late autumn weeks at the Burford Bridge Inn, finished the last five hundred lines of *Endymion*, was drawn by the spell of moonlight ("'you a' seen the moon?'") up the hill at evening, wrote the famous "drear-nighted December" song, and poured out in letters to his friends his half-formed, none the less illuminating guesses on the relations of imagination to ultimate truth?

It was in the late autumn of 1867, almost exactly half a century after Keats's stay at Burford Bridge, that George Meredith fixed his home at Flint Cottage a quarter of a mile away. The association with Keats, it may be noted, was one of the attractions the place presented to him. In the first letter I had from him inviting me there, he writes of it as a place where Keats "did abide for a while, between one poem and another, conceiving, as I have fancied, a spot 'where damp moisture breeds The pipy hemlock to strange over-growth.'" This is a mistake. Beside the banks of that sluggish, eccentric river the Mole, with its

habit of diving and disappearing altogether at certain places in the summer heats, there may for aught I know be plashy places fitted to suggest these lines to Keats. But as a matter of fact the hymn to Pan, where they occur, had been written before ever he came to those parts, in Thanet or perhaps at Canterbury. My own conviction is that he had conceived the lines earlier yet, and that they had been suggested by one of the Hampstead ponds which he had to pass on his walks between Leigh Hunt's lodgings in the Vale of Health and his brothers' quarters in the Poultry. Even now, when the ponds are much better kept and the ground about them better drained than is recorded to have been then the case, this one is partly fringed, as the others are not, with a belt of rushes among which great plants of hemlock may be seen bearing their blooms in early summer.

But to return to Meredith—before settling at Flint Cottage he knew the neighbourhood well. He had lived for some years of his early youth near Weybridge, later for several more years near Esher, and mighty walker as he was, had in tramps at all hours of the day and night—by predilection round about the hour of dawn—come to know all the stretches of chalk down or heather, all the valleys and water-meadows and steep woodlands, the roads and farm tracks and foot-ways, of mid-Surrey, and the men and creatures frequenting them, with a familiarity such as scarcely any other man has possessed, a poet's intimacy at once ardently imaginative and minutely observant. Within a month or two after his settling into Flint Cottage he

writes to a friend: "Who could help flourishing here? I am every morning on the top of Box Hill—as its flower, its bird, its prophet. I drop down the moon on one side, I draw up the sun on t'other. I breathe fine air. I shout ha ha to the gates of the world. Then I descend, and know myself a donkey for doing it." It was here, either in the cottage itself or in the two-roomed châlet which he afterwards built in an upper corner of his garden, and from the windows of which, as he has told us, he loved to welcome the thrushes when they came in February to flute their prelude to the nightingales of April—it was here that he wrote the whole succession of his middle and later novels: *Harry Richmond* and *Beauchamp's Career* and *The Egoist* and *Diana of the Crossways* and *One of our Conquerors* and *Lord Ormont* and *The Amazing Marriage;* here also all his middle and later poetry: *Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth, Ballads and Poems of Tragic Life, A Reading of Earth, A Reading of Life,* and the rest. More incessant and strenuous labour of brain and heart together than those titles signify is hardly recorded of any man. During the first fifteen or more of this period of forty years neither his novels nor his poetry had any success with the public. Outside a narrow circle of friends and admirers he had few readers and none but harsh critics, and frugal as he was, had to live not by the exercise of his genius but by hack-work as a journalist and publisher's reader. But the friends were staunch and the admirers keen: and the cottage at Box Hill was well frequented by an intim-

ate circle of those who appreciated both the man and his work. Some men are repelled, others attracted, by a personality more powerful and shining than their own. To those whom such a personality attracts, Meredith's physical activity, strength, and beauty, the exuberance and authority of his talk, with its singular blend of elaborate high courtesy and unsparing raillery, its brusque transitions from grave wisdom to riotous hyperbolical laughter, his eager interest in all phases of life, literature and politics, his staunchness, and at the same time sensitiveness, in friendship, his genial yet fastidious conviviality, made him the most impressive and stimulating of companions.

It was not until 1878 that I first met him, and then only to shake hands on the introduction of Louis Stevenson. Stevenson was staying at the Burford Bridge Inn with his parents, busy upon the early part of his *New Arabian Nights* (the Suicide Club chapters), and finding himself thus almost at Meredith's door, had sought leave, sensitively and shyly, not without fear of a rebuff, to pay him the homage of a beginner to a master. The two had common friends in a young couple then living at Pixholme close by, the Jim Gordons,* and in their garden Meredith and Stevenson were invited to meet. Stevenson, who could be as engaging in deference as he was brilliant and stimulating in challenge, soon completely won the affection of his senior, and their meetings were renewed almost

* Mrs. Gordon, *née* Alice Brandreth, is now the wife of Sir John George Butcher, Bart., M.P. for the City of York. See her volume, *Memories of George Meredith, O.M.*: Constable & Co., 1919.

daily for several weeks. One afternoon during those weeks, having gone down to Box Hill to see Stevenson and the Gordons, I remember being introduced to Meredith across a stile or field gate to which he had come up in company with the two Stevensons, Louis and Bob, at the end of a twelve-mile walk ; a thing of which Louis was well capable in those days, before his journey to California, but never afterwards. Stevenson was there again with his wife in 1881 and 1882, and for the last time in August 1886, a year before he left England never to return. When Meredith first planned his novel, *The Amazing Marriage*, he meant to make one of his characters, Gower Woodseer, in some measure a portrait of R. L. S., but changed his purpose in the execution, and scarce a trace of likeness remains.

There was something about Burford Bridge and its neighbourhood, apart from the attraction of Meredith's company, which drew Stevenson for its own sake and set his imagination working. His "Suicide Club" stories, though written there, had of course nothing to do with the sentiment of the scene : they had been conceived in nocturnal prowls about London. But some years later Stevenson coupled the Burford Bridge Inn with the Hawes Inn at Queen's Ferry on the Forth as a place made for adventure and thrilling with suggestions of potential romance. His words are well known :—"I have lived both at the Hawes and Burford in a perpetual flutter, on the heels, as it seemed, of some adventure that should justify the place ; but though the feeling had me to bed at night and called me again at morning in one unbroken round of pleasure

and suspense, nothing befell me in either worth remark. The man or the hour had not yet come; but some day, I think, a boat shall put off from the Queen's Ferry, fraught with a dear cargo, and some frosty night a horseman, on a tragic errand, rattle with his whip upon the green shutters of the inn at Burford." The hope was realized as to Queen's Ferry, but never as to Burford Bridge. I imagine the attempt would have been made in connection with his projected tale, *Jerry Abershaw*, at one time eagerly planned but never brought even so far into being as that other highway story, *The Great North Road*, which remains so tantalizing a fragment in his work. But to return to his special relations with Meredith—of all the elder master's letters, none perhaps is more characteristic than that which he wrote to R. L. S. on the publication of his first book, *The Inland Voyage*. I give only the critical paragraphs of the letter, which has been printed in full in Mr. W. Meredith's two-volume edition of his father's correspondence.

"I have been fully pleased. The writing is of the rare kind which is naturally simple yet picked and choice. It is literature. The eye on land and people embraces both, and does not take them up in bits. I have returned to the reading and shall again. The reflections wisely tickle, they are in the right good tone of philosophy interwrought with humour.

"My protest is against the Preface and the final page. The Preface is keenly in Osric's vein—'everything you will, dear worthy public, but we are exceedingly modest and doubt an you will read us, though exquisitely silken-calved we are, and could say a word of ourselves, yet on seeing our book, were we amazed at our littleness indeed and truly, my lord Public!' As for the closing page

it is rank recreancy. 'Yes, Mr. Barlow,' said Tommy, 'I have travelled abroad, under various mishaps, to learn in the end that the rarest adventures are those one does not go forth to seek.' 'My very words to him,' said Mr. Barlow to himself, at the same time presenting Tommy with a guinea piece.—This last page is quite out of tone with the spirit of the book.

"I remember 'On the Oise,' you speak of the river hurrying on, 'never pausing to take breath.' This, and a touch of excess in dealing with the reeds, whom you deprive of their beauty by overinforming them with your sensations, I feel painfully to be levelled at the Saxon head. It is in the style of Dickens."

Coming from a ripe to a budding genius, from a man of fifty to one of twenty-eight, could praise and admonition, encouragement and a touch of satire, be blended more wisely and adroitly? Or could any words bear more sharply the characteristic Meredithian mint-mark? To us who knew him the second paragraph in particular carries a quintessential flavour of the man. Those bits of parody in the styles of Osric and of *Sandford and Merton*—how many afternoons of rich hour-long talk do they recall, when the master, walking in the garden or on the hill-side with friends, would stop and lean back against his stick and fall to teasing one or the other of us by imputing to him all manner of absurd adventures and parts in imaginary conversations. He would begin quietly and plausibly, until by and by his invention, taking wing, would soar as it were in ascending spirals into a burlesque empyrean where it would sustain itself unflaggingly, not without a penetrating shaft aimed from time to time at the true character and weaknesses of the person parodied. The most characteristic strain

in his ordinary manner was this blend of the most scrupulous courtesy with the frankest raillery, both somewhat elaborate in their kind. He would take and keep the same tone with servants, whom it mystified beyond measure but none the less delighted, and who adored him. (I am thinking naturally and in especial of the invaluable man-of-all-work, Cole.) He would even take it with his pet dogs. I have noticed that the dogs of men of genius love them more passionately and devotedly than they love ordinary masters, I suppose feeling in them some extra glow and intensity of the emotional faculties calling for a response in kind. To the succession of black and tan or pure tan dachshunds given to Meredith by various friends, Koby and Bruny and Pete (for 'Kobold,' 'Bruno,' 'Peto'), and Islet, on whom he wrote his well-known elegy—to these it was a delight to hear him talking eagerly by the half hour together in terms now of caressing endearment, now of irony, or sometimes, when the poaching instinct had proved too strong in any of them, of pained parental reproof.

Divers common friends have assured me, and I can easily believe, that the master was never more himself than when he occasionally received on their Sunday afternoon peregrinations the company of walkers whom Leslie Stephen had organized under the name of the Sunday Tramps. None but the youngest of my readers will need telling how Stephen excelled no less as an athletic walker and mountaineer than as a masterly critic, editor, and biographer: "long Leslie Stephen," as we used commonly to call him, for long

he was alike of back, leg, and stride, of nose and of beard (the fine forked and flowing auburn beard depicted in Watts's well-known portrait). He had no small talk, and to strangers or ordinary acquaintances was apt to seem a character even sardonically dry and shy. But no man had a greater power of winning the love of those to whom he felt himself drawn. He had for wife first one of the most delightful of women, and after her death another who was also one of the most beautiful, and for devoted men-friends a pick of the choicest spirits of his time, both English and American. Of these friends Meredith was one of the closest, and in the character of Vernon Whitford in *The Egoist* has turned the intimacy to living literary account. He was never one of Stephen's troop of Tramps himself, but his cottage was pretty often made a starting-point or resting-point for their outings.* Not long after the society was founded, which was in 1879, his own walking powers began little by little to fail. For the first few years he would go a good part of the day's walk with them, then gradually not for more than a mile or two; but as long as their little society lasted he used to receive them into his cottage and hold forth among them, I am told, at his best.

As regards my own relations with Meredith, I have told how I shook hands with him across a stile in 1878. But my intimacy did not begin till after the death of his second wife in 1885 and my own removal from my previous headquarters at Cambridge to take up work

* For a full account of the Tramps, see F. W. Maitland, *The Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen*, Duckworth, 1907.

at the British Museum. The days of his neglect were then passing away. After the publication of *The Egoist* and *Diana of the Crossways* critics like Stevenson and Henley, with their zeal and energy and power of making themselves heard, had forced Meredith afresh upon the attention both of his own contemporaries and theirs. A still younger generation needed no convincing; American appreciation quickly followed; and so by degrees the enthusiasm of the few succeeded in making admiration for him a fashion with the many. At the same time his bodily, though not his intellectual, vigour was beginning by gradual degrees to flag. The reddish brown had quite faded from his hair and given place to the shade between grizzled and silvery that went so well with his habitual, unvarying suit of warm light-grey set off by a bright scarlet tie. But both of hair and beard the crop was as rich and wavy as ever; and the features retained unimpaired alike their fine cutting and their firm resolute air. His voice had not at all lost—indeed it never lost—its strong virile *timbre*, nor his utterance its authoritative rotundity and fulness; for his speech was ever clear-cut and complete, and the fashion, growing, I fear, in our modern English conversation of lazily mumbling and muttering at one another from behind our teeth slurred, half-articulate sounds instead of formed words, had no countenance from him. The range of his walks was beginning to be much narrowed, but he could still breast gallantly the hill that rises from just outside his garden gate, and it was only by slow degrees that the symptoms developed themselves

of that malady which was to cripple his lower limbs entirely some years before the end.

From the twenty years of his later life during which Meredith used to make me welcome whenever I liked to come, what have I chiefly to recall? Well, I never attempted, even mentally, to Boswellize him. Remember, moreover, that to make the one and only Boswell it took the one and only Johnson: the talker of all talkers most accustomed to deliver himself in brief, conclusive, as it were portable sentences, each rememberably laying down—say rather hammering down—the law on this or that question of life or conduct or opinion. Meredith was fond, as all his readers know, of composing condensed oracular aphorisms such as those of the Pilgrim's Scrip in *Richard Feverel*: but these were literary products, the fruits of hard meditation during solitary walks or in his study. Several writers of recollections have set down memories of his talk when he delivered himself more or less in the same vein orally. But to my mind he was never in that vein his best self. His best and most characteristic talk was above all things spontaneous, abundant, inventive, leaping and flinging itself from idea to idea and from clause to clause. The more overpowering of his monologues sprang sometimes from the mere overflow of animal and intellectual spirits. Sometimes, before a mixed company which included strangers, I fear it must be owned that they gave an impression of proceeding from a desire to show off and play fireworks. I do not think that impression was quite just. The truth is that Meredith cherished an ideal of what the

brilliance of everyday social intercourse ought to be which corresponded not at all to the capacities of ordinary persons but to the quite abnormal and super-athletic activities of his own brains. He never fully realized the difference between his own intellect and those of average people. In his novels he will often make characters described as ordinary talk like himself, and they, being his creations, can only do as he bids them. But when in real life he would sometimes try to lift the talk of a commonplace company to his own plane, the result was apt to be that he would be left discoursing alone to auditors silent and gaping, disconcerted or perhaps even annoyed. Among those who knew him well and could play up to him a similar strain of talk went better. I have told how one of his favourite diversions, when there were three or four friends, men or women, or both, gathered about him, was to begin bantering one of them for the entertainment of the rest. Vanity might suffer under the play: indeed vanity was never much at ease in Meredith's company. To give any sign of pique or resentment was fatal. Little mercy would then be shown you: the only safe course was to go all the way with him, to enter into the spirit of his inventions and if possible burlesque his burlesque, when he would be delighted with you and himself, and throw back his beautiful head, and crow with his great manly laugh, and prolong the talk in high good humour, descending by easy degrees into the vein of genial and equal companionship.

He loved argument, and would sometimes challenge and dispute for the mere sake of disputation and

mental exercise. I remember one rather specially striking case in point from my own intercourse with him. I had broken out vehemently on the impossibility of enjoying wild scenery in the company of a miscellaneous crowd of tourists. He at once fell upon me fiercely for the sin of selfish exclusiveness and fancied superiority to fellow-beings as good as myself. I stood my ground and pushed him with questions: whether in point of fact the spiritual and imaginative effect of a certain class of scenes did not depend essentially on their being visited in solitude or in the chosen company of one or two: whether, for instance, the shores of a remote Highland loch could speak to one, when a rackety packetful of MacBrayne's trippers had just been dumped upon them from an excursion steamer, as they spoke to one when one was alone: whether, if he himself went to one of his old haunts in Switzerland or Tyrol and found a huge new block of hotel building disfiguring the scene at its most sensitive point, and pouring forth its crowd of cosmopolitan chatterers and loungers, he would not turn away in disappointment: whether, in fine, it was not one of the standing contrarieties of things, proving no good to be without its evil, that the modern poetic and romantic love of—or let us say rather fashion for —wild scenes and solitudes should have had, oftener than not, now that it has been turned to profitable account by hotel speculators and advertisers, the practical effect of robbing the scenes of their wildness and the solitudes of their power upon the soul. In such discussions he would not usually be overbearing or

unreasonable, or use his resources merely to crush or bemock one, and I remember that on this occasion I got him to something almost like a half-way agreement. It has been borne in upon me since that he must have been from the beginning arguing chiefly for argument's sake, for I find among his published letters one to the Press against a proposed extension railway to Ambleside in the Lake Country; and in this he takes, not less effectively than decisively, exactly the same line as I had found myself taking against him in talk as above related:—

> Where there is dissension between rich and poor, I do not commonly side with the former. I am against the project because it does not promise to be of good use to the people. . . . We have here one of the few instances of Sentimentalists pleading for the general interests, Conservatives upholding the cause of Democrats. I suppose that an Ambleside railway would offer a paying investment to the Shareholder; it would fatten some publican; and it would spare the excursionist that exercise of his legs and chest which it is beneficial for him to take. . . . It cannot be thought that Englishmen will allow their one recreative holiday ground of high hill and deep dale (I would add "consecrated by one of our noblest poets," but that I am on my guard against treating the subject emotionally) to be a place of no retreat. They must have ceased to discern the quality of true utility if they permit it. Spiritual beauty serves us to the full as much as material force, and it must have its homes of seclusion to live. We must guard it to keep it.

It must not be supposed from what I have said that either *badinage* and satire, or disputation for disputation's sake, were at all times elements in Meredith's conversation. No reader of his novels but must have

been impressed by the contrast between the incessant elaborate fireworks of wit (wit surely degenerating too often into tiresome intellectual foppery and show-off ?) in which his characters are made to indulge in their lighter moments and the straightforward intensity of feeling and utterance—utterance lucid however packed and pregnant—commonly assigned to them in crucial moments of passion. A somewhat similar contrast marked, in my experience, their author's show conversation in mixed company and his intimate talk in the privacy of friendship. No man could be more gravely or more sagaciously sympathetic when the appeal for sympathy was made, or could put more of bracing life-wisdom into advice on matters of conduct when his advice was sought. To women (at least to the right kind of women, for with sentimentalists or self-flatterers of either sex he had small patience) he could be the most chivalrous-hearted and tenderly understanding and honourably helpful of men, as beseemed the creator of Lucy Feverel and Rose Jocelyn and Renée and Clara Middleton, of Rhoda and Dahlia and Diana and the rest: his temper and discourse in these respects being in life and in literature entirely and admirably the same. In *tête-à-tête* intercourse he rarely, in my experience, mounted the high intellectual or fantastic stilts, but would enter simply, with the power and incisiveness of a master but on perfectly free and equal terms, on almost any subject of human or historical or literary discussion.

A very frequent subject of talk between us was on the duty and necessity for England of the obligation

to national service. He conceived military training to be a thing desirable in every state, desirable for the sake of the manhood, the self-respect, the physical and moral health of its citizens, and desirable for ourselves above all peoples. He held that if our population would not shake off its carelessness and sloth, born of plethora, and submit to that discipline, as well as to other wholesome disciplines of mind and body, our day was done. He believed that a more sternly trained race like the Germans would surely win against us and deserve to win. These convictions at the same time did not shake his attachment to the Liberal party in the state, which almost to a man was fanatically opposed to them. When I urged that he should strive to convert his political friends and should in writing declare his mind on the question in terms more calculated to strike home than the cryptic utterances which he puts into the mouths of a Colney Durance or a Simeon Fenellan, he was apt to answer as though the matter were one which concerned him not as one of ourselves, but only as a critic and onlooker.

In discussions on England and her character and destinies he would always separate himself from his countrymen and say "You English." This attitude seemed to me to be due partly to a cherished consciousness of, or at all events belief in, his own purely Celtic blood (his father having been Welsh and his mother Irish), partly to the sense of alienation from the sympathies of his countrymen which had been forced on his proud and sensitive nature by their long neglect of his work. Dearly as he loved, and deeply beyond all

men as he knew, the English soil, he would sometimes inveigh against defects of the English mind and character in the tone not only of a detached stranger but almost of an enemy. This from such a man, by that time at any rate recognized as one of the glories of our age and country, was a thing that I used sometimes to find hard to bear. The true key to his mind in the matter is perhaps to be found in his words written in 1870: "I am neither German nor French, nor, unless the nation is attacked, English. I am European and Cosmopolitan—for humanity! The nation which shows most worth is the nation I love and reverence." Nearly thirty years later, in one of his very last letters, he writes: "As to our country, if the people were awake, they would submit to be drilled. . . . The fear of imposing drill for at least a year seems to me a forecast of the national tragedy." Conceive what would have been his scorn for those who shrieked against the duty of imposing national service even after the outbreak of the world war, during those months of deadly peril to all that England stands for and holds dear. But what I like better to conceive is the conversion he must needs have undergone had he lived to see his own critical and contemptuous misgivings on England's account belied when the day of trial came—to see her thrust her own currish counsellors aside and shoulder valiantly and in the end victoriously the tremendous duties of the time.

Most of Meredith's friends and admirers cared much more, at least during his life-time, for his novels than for his poems. I think one of the things which made

him tolerate my company was the interest, puzzled and fretted interest though it often was, which I took in his poetry. Very much of this had always repelled me by its obscurity: but among the rest, the things relatively clear, there were some that seemed to me in various kinds unsurpassed, as in the simple lyric kind *The Sweet o' the Year* and *Autumn Even Song*; in more strenuous and ambitious kinds *Melampus; Earth and a Wedded Woman; Love in the Valley*, surely as rich and original a love-lyric, or lyric and idyll in one, as was ever written. Equally pre-eminent among lyrics political seemed to me the ode *On France* written after her overthrow in 1870 and foretelling for her much such a resurrection as we afterwards witnessed. I was proportionately disappointed at the difficulty with which I found myself trying to follow the odes *On Napoleon* and *On French History* when he read them to me, then fresh written, in 1898. His tones in reading were resonant and masterful as I have said, but withal level and not much modulated or varied so as to help the sense; and in poems so close-packed and complicated in construction, so dense with thought and imagery as these, the full meaning of what he read was naturally hard to seize. As a rule he courted no criticism and allowed for no difficulty; but one day I remember that he was more indulgent than usual. He paused to say how he knew some people found his poetry obscure, and to ask whether I did, and where, and why? I tried to point out some puzzles in his printed poems which I had quite failed to solve, even with the page before me and full leisure to study it.

He was patient, but simply could not see that they were puzzles at all, and closed the talk characteristically with a jolly laugh over the sluggishness of my Saxon wits. In the course of it, defining his own aims and ideals in verse, he repeated several times with insistence, "Concentration and suggestion, Colvin, concentration and suggestion, those are the things I care for and am always trying for in poetry." It was a misfortune, I think, for his art, and probably for his hold of posterity, that theory should thus have come to reinforce and exaggerate habits of thought and style to which he was only too prone by instinct.*

But my frank admission of not being always able to follow him did not disgust him with me as a hearer.

* I borrowed this phrase of the master's for the title of a lecture, since printed as a pamphlet of the English Association (No. 32, 1915), in which I tried to define and illustrate various special modes of concentration and suggestion characteristic of some of our chief poets. And I indicated the higher rank to be assigned, as I think, to that mode in which not intellect but imagination plays the chief part; not intellect, ever challenging the mind to a wrestle among the problems and complexities of things, but imagination, which strikes into the heart of things an effortless and instantaneous light. Shakespeare is the greatest master in both modes. In the work of poets like Donne, Browning, Meredith, the intellectual mode of concentration and suggestion predominates: in that of Meredith to a degree which repels many readers and annoys them. But it is clear that what repels and annoys one class of mind attracts and stimulates another; witness Mr. G. M. Trevelyan's interesting volume, *The Poetry and Philosophy of George Meredith*, in which he seems to show that what has chiefly drawn him to the author's work is its continual athletic play of wit and challenge to mental effort in the reader.

Just before Christmas, 1889, I had the following letter from him :—

My dear Colvin,—

I don't like the account you give of yourself, and shall be glad to hear when you can take a day and night here with me. I will read you some hexameters—a version of the passages of the Iliad best known—sounding to me somewhat of the sea, a poor shell, but suggesting Homer. Please tell your American that I am rarely in town, but that if he will come to me *any* day this week, he will find me here, happy to entertain him at dinner. Say it, using the phrases. He has but to write to me, naming his day.—Browning's death grieved and disconcerted me. I placed reliance on his active strength.—But, as to all old men Juvenal's X is right absolutely. Loss of friends gives us our *pœna diu viventibus*.

Yours ever,

George Meredith.

I went and can remember as though it were yesterday his reading, with his strong, masculine, authoritative voice and rotund, precise enunciation : on the other hand, I have quite forgotten to what visitor from America his message of courtesy was directed. He read that day not only from his recent translations in the Homeric hexameter, but from a much earlier attempt at original writing in the more complicated " Galliambic " metre of Catullus's *Atys*. Once granted (a large concession) that the English accentual stress is in any true sense a metrical equivalent for the Greek or Latin quantity, I think Meredith's experiments in the classical metres are as successful as anyone's, though often, it must be admitted, at the cost of strained style and wretched construction. Here are

two of the passages from that day's reading which I find sticking closest to me in memory, partly I suppose because they ran more naturally and straightforwardly than most, partly by reason of the rousing and thrilling sonority with which he declaimed them. From the Iliad, Book XIV :—

Not the sea-wave so bellows abroad when it bursts upon shingle,
Whipped from the sea's deeps up by the terrible blast of the Northwind ;
Nay, nor is ever the roar of the fierce fire's rush so arousing,
Down along mountain-glades, when it surges to kindle a woodland ;
Nay, nor so tonant thunders the stress of the gale in the oak-trees'
Foliage-tresses high, when it rages to raveing its utmost ;
As rose then stupendous the Trojans' cry and Achaians',
Dread upshouting as one when together they clashed in the conflict.

From his own *Phaëton* :

All the end foreseeing, Phœbus to his oath irrevocable
Bowed obedient, deploring the insanity pitiless.
Then the flame-outsnorting horses were led forth : it was so decreed.
They were yoked before the glad youth by his sister-ancillaries.
Swift the ripple ripples follow'd, as of aureate Helicon,
Down their flanks, while they impatient pawed desire of the distances,
And the bit with fury champed. Oh ! unimaginable delight !
Unimagined speed and splendour in the circle of upper air !
Glory grander than the armed host upon earth singing victory !

The Juvenal reference in the letter above quoted is

of course to the famous passage in the tenth satire,* on *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (to adopt Johnson's title for it), where in reciting the penalties of prolonged age the satirist rises for the nonce into a strain of sombre magnificence second only, if second, to certain

* Ut vigeant sensus animi, ducenda tamen sunt
Funera natorum, rogus aspiciendus amatæ
Conjugis et fratris plenæque sororibus urnæ.
Hæc data pœna diu viventibus, ut renovata
Semper clade domus multis in luctibus inque
Perpetuo mœrore et nigra veste senescunt, etc., etc.

Thus diluted by Johnson (whom one does not commonly think of as a diluter) in lines of *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, some of which have become proverbial :—

But grant, the virtues of a temp'rate prime
Bless with an age exempt from scorn or crime ;
An age that melts with unperceiv'd decay,
And glides in modest innocence away ;
Whose peaceful day Benevolence endears,
Whose night congratulating Conscience cheers ;
The gen'ral fav'rite as the gen'ral friend :
Such age there is, and who shall wish its end ?
Yet ev'n on this her load Misfortune flings,
To press the weary minutes' flagging wings ;
New sorrow rises as the day returns,
A sister sickens, or a daughter mourns.
Now kindred Merit fills the sable bier,
Now lacerated Friendship claims a tear ;
Year chases year, decay pursues decay,
Still drops some joy from with'ring life away ;
New forms arise, and diff'rent views engage,
Superfluous lags the vet'ran on the stage,
Till pitying Nature signs the last release,
And bids afflicted worth retire to peace.

kindred passages in Lucretius. The mood here expressed was in Meredith quite exceptional. He had his dark hours, but was the last man to think tragically or indignantly of the common processes and ordinances of nature, as Juvenal makes us feel that he thought of them even while he exhorts men to submission and moderation of inordinate desires. Meredith's complaint is never against nature, but against the spirit in man which misreads her laws and murmurs at them. Acquiescence, unembittered acquiescence, was his doctrine; it was also, both by instinct and discipline, his practice. He lived after this for twenty honoured years, and suffered more than his share of physical pain and infirmity. As disabilities grew on him, (it is true they hardly at all impaired the energies of his mind,) he bore them with constancy and cheerfulness, mellowing and growing the while in gentleness and in power of sympathy with other and younger minds.

For some years before the end he had become quite incapable of walking and received his friends as a prisoner and a fixture to his armchair. He grew deaf and gradually deafer, so that to contribute any share of one's own to the talk became an effort, and one had more and more to be content with trying to convey to his hearing some suggestion that should stimulate him to monologue. But the intellect remained quite undimmed, the spirit quite unquenchable: his thirst for reading, and especially for French historical and biographical reading, abated not a jot: his interest in politics and literature and persons, the work of his contemporaries and the promise of his juniors, remained

as keen as ever. When one succeeded in drawing a monologue it would sometimes be almost as brilliant and well-sustained as those of earlier days. For two years I had for one reason or another failed to see him, when one day in the mid-spring of 1909 came the news of his serious illness, and almost immediately afterwards of his death. It was on a radiant May day, a day of summer rather than spring, that a little company of us, his friends, assembled by his cottage gate and followed his remains to the grave chosen for them in Dorking churchyard. That at least is the material account and external semblance of what happened. What truly, to the inward and spiritual sense, happened on that day has been told by the most devoted of his younger friends, Sir James Barrie, in words perhaps as moving as were ever written by one man of letters about another. When the coaches were gone, the cottage, to the unsealed vision, was according to Barrie not deserted. There still sat in his chair, as of yore, an old man, but presently his old age fell away from him (" for this is what is meant by Death to such as he "). He rose and went through the door into the garden, where he found all the men and women of his creation drawn up to salute and do him reverence: thence up the garden walks—

" to the chalet where he worked, and good and brave men will for ever bow proudly before it, but good and brave women will bow more proudly still. He went there only because he had gone so often, and this time the door was locked ; he did not know why nor care. He came swinging down the path, singing lustily, and calling to his dogs, his dogs of the present and the past ; and they

yelped with joy, for they knew they were once again to breast the hill with him.

"He strode up the hill whirling his staff, for which he had no longer any other use. His hearing was again so acute that from far away on the Dorking road he could hear the rumbling of a coach. It had been disputed whether he should be buried in Westminster Abbey or in a quiet churchyard, and there came to him somehow a knowledge (it was the last he ever knew of little things) that people had been at variance as to whether a casket of dust should be laid away in one hole or in another, and he flung back his head with the old glorious action, and laughed a laugh 'broad as a thousand beeves at pasture.'

"Box Hill was no longer deserted. When a great man dies—and this was one of the greatest since Shakespeare—the immortals await him at the top of the nearest hill. He looked up and saw his peers. They were all young, like himself. He waved the staff in greeting. One, a mere stripling, 'slight unspeakably,' R. L. S., detached himself from the others, crying gloriously, 'Here's the fellow I have been telling you about!' and ran down the hill to be the first to take his Master's hand. In the meanwhile an empty coach was rolling on to Dorking."

CHAPTER XI

WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE

Probably there never lived in any community an individual man the sense of whose existence was more constantly and forcibly present to the general mind than was that of Mr. Gladstone to the English mind during the prolonged plenitude of his powers. It was not merely the energies he displayed and the victories he achieved in legislative and administrative spheres that thus occupied the public consciousness. It was the sense of his being a great and pre-eminent personality, possessing in a singular degree that heightened intensity of being, that mysterious quality, as undefinable as it is unmistakable, to which we give the name of genius. To give instances of the command he exercised over assemblies whether popular or deliberative, would be to waste words; the history of his time and country, the memories of the surviving thousands of those who heard him, are full of them. Acknowledgment of his personal pre-eminence and magnetism, of the effluence from him of forces both spiritual and physical exceeding those of other men, imposed itself independently of any belief in the wisdom of his words or in the righteousness of the causes which he pleaded, although his own always fervent

conviction of such wisdom and righteousness no doubt contributed to the impression made. It was possible to come away from listening to any of his great efforts on the affairs of the Near East or of Ireland, or on domestic reform or any disputable matter whatever, a still unconverted opponent, but not a whit the less thrilled and spell-bound. The spare, erect, commanding figure, the grandly modelled and deeply furrowed features, the vivid, almost luminous, alabaster-like pallor of the skin, with the pure tint, even in extreme age, of the rare flush when it came, the formidable roll and far-reaching flash of the eye, like that which I have seen an old condor in captivity cast upon the crowd from his rock-perch in the public garden, made his mere platform presence impressive beyond all others, even before there came into play the commanding sonorities of the voice and every natural resource as well as every practised skill of the master orator. The Miltonic quotation for calling up his aspect and presence in public debate is hackneyed, but fits so perfectly that I cannot forbear to repeat it :—

> —" with grave
> Aspect he rose, and in his rising seemed
> A pillar of state. Deep on his front engraven
> Deliberation sat, and public care "—
> —" Sage he stood,
> With Atlantean shoulders fit to bear
> The weight of mightiest monarchies ; his look
> Drew audience and attention still as night
> Or summer's noontide air."

In saying that he possessed every skill and every re-

source of the practised orator I should have made one reservation. Epigrammatic pith and point, the power of launching phrases that lit up the subject in a flash or confounded opponents with one thrust, were not among his gifts. Amplitude and plenitude, rhetorical abundance and iteration, were rather his weapons. As a writer most readers feel him to be distinctly, sometimes even distressingly, wordy. But of words when they were delivered with such intensity of conviction, and in tones of such persuasion and command, as were his in public speaking, it seemed as though one could never have too much or even enough.

Quite apart from the conspicuousness of a public occasion, or the contagion of the collective enthusiasm of an audience, one was apt at any time, so long as he remained among us, to become suddenly aware in the street of the approach of a magnetic personality, one that made itself felt, it might be, some fifty yards away through the press, before one had time to realize that this was Mr. G. coming along,—"Mr. G." was the ordinary appellation in use among secretaries and other associates and intimates of his circle. An intimate frequenter of that circle I never was, though several of its members were my friends, and though I came in, at longish intervals through nearly thirty years, for an occasional share of the great man's own courtesy and kindness. The first time I met him was at Naworth, the Border seat of the Carlisle Howards, the same romantically placed, historically famous, and in those days delightfully hospitable house where I had first met Robert Browning a few years before. This

was at the beginning of September, 1873, when Mr. Gladstone was in his fourth year of office as Prime Minister and the sixty-fourth of his age. He had been on an official visit to the Queen at Balmoral, and the route by which he had chosen to leave was a long day's walk, over some of the roughest tracks and through some of the wildest scenery in the Grampians, to Kingussie Station on the Highland Railway. Having slept one night at Kingussie, he took train the next day to Carlisle, and arrived at Naworth in the evening, to all appearance perfectly fresh and unfatigued by his long tramp of the day before. My occasional after-meetings with him used to be either again at the same house, or at one or another of several houses of his friends or connections in town and country, and occasionally in later days under his own roof in London.

Politics were never a main interest of mine, except so far as they must be more or less the interest of every citizen; and however much I might enjoy hearing Mr. Gladstone dilate out of the fullness of his experience on the political history of his own time (and in this he was ever at his best), to challenge him to a conversation on politics I should have thought an impertinence. His second dominant study and preoccupation, theology, was for me also ruled out by my lack of competence. But there were few other subjects of historical or literary interest on which he was not ready and equipped to talk; and there were two in particular, Homer and Dante, which he had studied with as much zeal and persistency as any professed specialist in

either field. Always strongly impressed while conversation with him lasted, it generally happened to me, on thinking it over afterwards, to realize that what had impressed me had been less what he said than the way he said it, less the pertinence or originality of his matter than his fine manner and potent temperament in discourse. In those first days at Naworth, I remember, I came in for a sample of what struck me as not being by any means his best. An opportunity presenting itself, I strove hard to make him, with the photograph before us, share my enthusiasm for a certain splendid and almost uninjured Greek fourth-century head of a goddess, in all probability Aphroditê, discovered not long before in Armenia and then under offer to the British Museum by the dealer Castellani. Any and every Greek subject that might be broached led Mr. Gladstone's mind at once and inevitably to Homer. Naturally I did not disclose the fact that I was one of the reviewers who some time earlier, in dealing with his volume *Juventus Mundi*, had expressed without compromise the opinion (shared by practically all trained scholars and archæologists) that no Homeric critic had ever shown, along with so minute and systematically tabulated a knowledge of the text, such ingenious perversity as he in comment and interpretation. For one thing Mr. Gladstone held, and worked out with insistent affirmation and detail, the theory that the Iliad and Odyssey were indisputably the work of a single individual poet; that so far as concerns the war of Troy in its human aspects the Iliad is strictly historical, and that as to the gods

and goddesses who play so large a part in the story, they and their several characters and the Olympian system to which they belong are the actual creation of Homer himself. I found that these rooted convictions concerning Homer stood in the way of his being much interested in my Aphroditê head, or even admitting that it could be Aphroditè at all. Looking upon Homer as the one responsible founder and "maker" (his own word) of the Greek religion, and regulator of the functions and precedence of the Greek gods—as it were a kind of Lord Chamberlain of Olympus—he had decided, from the more or less humiliating predicaments in which the poet puts her both in the Iliad and Odyssey, that Homer had for moral reasons deliberately made Aphroditê ridiculous. Ridiculous, or at least trivial, she must accordingly remain; therefore the divinity represented in this grand head could not be she. On this theme he dilated with unquestioning energy and conviction. It was no use quoting the "Venus of Milo" and other well-known existing types of a noble and dignified Aphroditê. Of ideas running counter to his preconceptions his mind was not receptive, and his quite unfounded negative assurance on this point could not be shaken. I was half inclined at the time to suppose that his coldness in response to my enthusiasm must arise from caution lest I should have designs upon the public purse in connection with the purchase of this head. If so, his caution was belated, for the purchase, though I did not know it at the time, had actually been concluded ten days before.

But his mind, as I had occasion more than once to observe, seemed always in an alert attitude of self-defence against any suggestion that seemed to point to an increased expenditure from the public purse. Conversation having one day turned on public salaries and the relative scales of pay for this or that kind of service, Mr. Gladstone said to me, "I for one would never be a party to increasing the salaries of you gentlemen of the British Museum, for a more delightful occupation I cannot conceive." I forbore to ask the great man whether he would push this view to its logical conclusion: whether, for instance, he would reduce the salary of a Prime Minister in proportion to the pleasure he might take in his work, or whether he would go the whole length with the late William Morris, who held, if I remember aright, that the most unpleasant kinds of labour ought to be the best paid, and that the coal-heaver, the dustman, and the scavenger ought to be consoled for the nature of their job by being given only about two hours' work a day and allowed during the rest of their time to spark about in velvet and sables. I merely agreed with his opinion of the Museum life and work.

Other talks which I specially well remember were marked, not by any such kind of critical perversity as those about Homer, but rather by the vehement affirmation of something commonplace and generally acknowledged. Young's *Night Thoughts* were mentioned, and Mr. Gladstone quoted some lines of the poem (I cannot remember which), lines of a gloomy and grand enough pomposity in their imitative sub-Miltonic manner; and went on to speak of the work

in general with respectful admiration, in the tone which had been habitual to an earlier generation than mine, or even, I should have supposed, than his own. He further reminded his hearers of the extraordinarily high place—equal to or higher than that of *Paradise Lost* itself—which the *Night Thoughts* had held for several generations in the esteem of continental readers, especially in France and Germany. "But," he then burst out, bringing his fist down with something of the flash and thunder of righteous indignation which so often signalized his public utterances, "but the man was a lickspittle and a sycophant; he was a shameless, fawning preferment-hunter." And he went on to denounce the grovelling flattery of Young's miscellaneous dedications to every kind of nobleman and place-holder, no matter how disreputable, his greed and baseness in hanging on in early life as a suppliant for patronage to the infamous Duke of Wharton, and later in disgracing his cloth by subservience to the King's mistress, Lady Yarmouth. He wound up by dwelling on the betterment of the times, which would make such proceedings on the part of such a man now equally needless and impossible.

The best talk about literature in which I can remember Mr. Gladstone taking a leading part turned on the nature and elements of tragedy, and on the difference between themes inherently tragic and those which owed their tragic character mainly to their treatment. Some examples from Greek and Elizabethan drama having been discussed, Mr. Gladstone presently, in his most earnest and arresting manner, affirmed that

in his judgment no theme was either more tragic in itself or more heightened in effect by its treatment than that of Scott's *Bride of Lammermoor*. He insisted on the circumstances of the deadly hereditary hate, fresher and better grounded than that of Montagues and Capulets, between the houses of Ravenswood and Ashton, and on the sense of such fixed implacable hate foredooming to disaster what might under other stars have been the reconciling loves of Edgar and Lucy. He dwelt on the heightening of all the actions and passions by the romantic gloom of the scenery amid which the tale unfolds itself, and by the grim staves of legendary prophecy represented as current in the minds of the common people and creating from the first an atmosphere of dire expectancy and awe. He reminded us how such prophetic saws and staves are not only ever on the lips of the hateful warlock, Elsie Gourlay, but how they darken with tragic foreknowledge even that almost incomparable, almost fully Shakespearean, comic and pathetic creation of the old steward Caleb Balderstone; and he dilated on the terrible intensity of the scene of the mad bride-murderess on her wedding night, and on the foretold but not less thrilling climax of the disappearance of the last heir of Ravenswood in the Kelpie's Flow. None of those present was disposed to contest on general grounds the claim thus made for Scott's masterpiece, I least of all;* and the further talk, to

* Let me take this opportunity of expressing my extreme dissent from the slighting estimate of the *Bride of Lammermoor* given by Dr. T. F. Henderson in the *Cambridge History of Literature* (vol. xii, p. 22).

which Mr. Gladstone listened attentively but did not, if I remember aright, contribute much, turned on certain doubts and reservations to be made in regard to it; as for instance, whether some of the incidents, such as those of the wild bull and the crash of lightning on Wolfe's Crag in the opening chapters, did not push romantic coincidence to the point of melodrama, and whether the Master himself is not a character partaking as much of the externally and conventionally melodramatic as of the truly tragic. And how, we all agreed in wondering, could the magician in his carelessness possibly have allowed himself to introduce, as he does, the finely conceived incident of the apparition to the Master beside the Mermaid's well of the spirit of old Alice at the moment of her death with an apology to the rationalist and sceptical which robs it of half its effect?

Another particularly vivid memory of Mr. Gladstone remaining with me is of an utterance humorously verging on the political. (As a rule I ventured to think him not at his best in humorous moments, and even that his countenance at such moments lost something of its paramount distinction, his smile of fun having in it rather more of slyness than of sweetness.) In the early autumn of 1881 he and I were walking side by side along a garden path at Hoar Cross, the country house of the sister of one of his great lifelong political allies, Lord Halifax. He was suffering from an attack of lumbago, and walked with his back bent and his hand held to the place where the pain was. Having once or twice tried to straighten himself up and found

the effort hurt him, he turned to me, still stooping with his hand to his back, and fastening his eyes on mine, said with a manner half jocular half distressful, but impressive as always, " I don't know whether to treat it by the method of conciliation or coercion." A few days later followed the great speech at Leeds denouncing the policy of Mr. Parnell and his associates as one of " marching through rapine to dismemberment," and a little later again the administrative act of consigning the Irish leader to Kilmainham jail. " Conciliation *versus* coercion "—the phrase very soon became a regular, habitual and threadbare one in the course of the Home Rule controversies which followed. But as spoken at such a moment in the Hoar Cross garden it struck freshly and significantly upon my ear.

It was at Cannes, in January, 1898, that I last had sight and speech of the great man. He was there as the guest of Lord and Lady Rendel, hoping to find from the climate some alleviation of the extremely painful illness (I believe internal cancer in the face near the eye) which had laid hold upon him. I happened to be also there, as a visitor in another house. Being well acquainted with his hosts, I went to call on them as a matter of course, without dreaming that I should be able to see their suffering guest, upon whose attention, under such circumstances, I had no claim whatever either of intimacy or of special allegiance. But they said they were sure he would like to shake hands with me, and took it upon themselves to send him word that I was there. To my surprise he sent

for me, just as he was getting into the carriage for his customary invalid drive, and with a manner of beautiful grace and courtesy, though evidently in severe pain, said that he was glad to have the opportunity of speaking with me, that he wished it were in his power to speak more and better, and bade me a grave, almost solemn good-bye, as though he felt that the end was drawing near. A kindlier, even a more touching, last memory of the illustrious veteran I could scarcely have had to carry away. He died in his own home some four months later.

CHAPTER XII

THE BRITISH MUSEUM AND SIR CHARLES NEWTON

From the thirty or all but thirty years which I spent living at and working for the British Museum there naturally lingers in my mind a varied medley of memories. But how attempt to sift and sort them ? How single out this or that group for inclusion in a budget, such as this is meant to be, of recollections of special places and individual persons ? To call the British Museum a place would seem a misnomer. Regarded as an area in the heart of London it is inconsiderable. Regarded as an architectural monument it is certainly less impressive than its designers intended it to be. Regarded for its contents and purposes it is neither more nor less than an epitome of the civilization of the world. No single imagination could frame or grasp an adequate conception of what is contained under that dome and in those galleries at Bloomsbury. The name Bloomsbury has in itself somehow a trivial sound and bourgeois associations. What name could be too august, too rich with connotations at once of learning and of romance, to be bestowed on that treasure-house where are assembled, besides the richest extant store of the written and printed products of man's mind, a share so vast and in quality so incom-

parable of the choicest examples of his handiwork? Though one of the latest of all the great museums of the Old World in its date of foundation, it may be counted the richest of them all in contents. Library and galleries together, even since the natural history collections were transferred to another part of the town, the treasures sheltered behind that colonnade and under those roofs are unmatchable. To have for one's life-work a responsible share in their custody, their management and augmentation, should surely be a thing to fill one's days with pride and to exalt the gait of one's ingoings and outgoings.

Well, well, I suppose no one, however privileged his or her vocation, has the sense of such privilege always consciously in mind. Daily duties are daily duties whatever their nature, and one's tendency is to go about them in an everyday, which is as much as to say in a humdrum, spirit. It might even be contended that those among us are the luckiest whose round of bread-winning duties is really humdrum and dull, so that the delights of art and literature, and of conversance with things of beauty and the mind, being reserved for the hours of leisure, may appeal all the more forcibly to sensibilities undulled by habit. Speaking for myself, I cannot pretend that I was habitually conscious of any special pride or privilege in living in an official house behind the long railing in Great Russell Street, and being saluted by liveried guardians, and passing up the steps and under the portico of the great façade on my way to my daily duties. The duties themselves involved, no doubt, one special

and unmistakable kind of pleasure, namely that arising from a consciousness of faculties necessarily, from the very nature of their employment, sharpening by daily exercise in the expert's work of technical knowledge and discrimination. At the same time a large proportion of the objects upon which such faculties had to be employed, at any rate in the special department of which I had charge, namely that of prints and drawings, were dull enough in themselves, the tedious uninspired output of scores and hundreds of mechanical plodders of all schools. A minority, on the other hand, were of a kind to awaken and keep awake whatever capacity of delighted appreciation, technical, æsthetic, and imaginative, one might possess. Use and familiarity could not much or permanently dull the zest of studying and handling and having charge of the most inspired and intimately personal handiwork of a Botticelli or a Raphael or a Michelangelo, a Dürer or a Rembrandt, a Turner or a Constable or a Blake, although on this or that day the sense of delighted admiration for and privileged intimacy with such spirits through their handiwork might and did strike home more deeply and happily than on others.

Furthermore, the mere necessary going to and fro between one's dwelling-house and one's work was apt at any casual moment to rouse one to a sudden thrilling pitch of delight in human achievement and of activity in the imaginative reconstruction of past glories. During all the earlier years of my service the approach to my department was through the Elgin room. Passing several times every day these fragments of

the finest and most felicitous of all achievements of human art, seeing them close at hand by every kind of light or half-light which an enclosed and roofed gallery and the varying dimness of the London atmosphere could afford, one took their glory for granted perhaps a hundred times against once or twice that one paused to realize and respond to it anew. And more rarely still one caught oneself in the endeavour to restore in imagination the temple with its pedimental groups, of which these were but the angle figures spared when the Venetian bomb-shells cast down and shattered the rest, and to give thanks that against that special episode in the unceasing world-tragedy of the Ruins of Time there is this one consolation at least to be set off, that here in the Bloomsbury gallery these fragments are placed near enough to the eye for their perfections to be gauged and studied, to be realized and taken in and absorbed, as could never have been the case when they stood when the building was intact, serving a merely decorative purpose in their pedimental angles forty feet above the eye. Of all random denunciations, Byron's tirade against Lord Elgin, in the *Curse of Minerva*, for removing these master works from their shattered pediments is perhaps the most perverse and foolish.

But the occupation of a museum official is not concerned only with the treasures of human handiwork under his care or coming daily under his eye. He needs also to be a student of human character, and has plenty of scope for any faculty in that kind with which nature or experience may have endowed him.

For one thing, it is a chief part of his duty to win the regard and confidence of private collectors, to help and stimulate them in their pursuits, putting his knowledge at their disposal but making them feel the while that their prime, their binding, duty is to acknowledge such help by destining their collections in the long run to enrich the institution which he serves. It is open to a collector to do one of three things with his treasures after his death: leave them intact to his heirs: leave them to be dispersed by auction, or leave them to enrich some public gallery or museum. The first alternative generally attracts him least. The second appeals to him by the thought of the excitement and competition, such as have been the zest of his own life, which his sale will arouse among other amateurs and collectors, folk of his own kidney, after he is gone. The third offers the reward of the permanent recognition which will await his name as that of an enlightened amateur and national or civic benefactor. It is the value and excellence of this last reward which those public guardians of such things whom he may count among his friends are bound with all their power to impress upon him.

Apart from such practical ends, a study interesting in itself might doubtless be made of the comparative psychology of collectors, of persons in whom the love of having and handling picked works of art and handicraft for their own is a passion innate or acquired. In creative literature, I do not remember any special instance of a character in whom the collecting passion is incarnate except that famous one of Cousin Pons

in Balzac's *Les Parents Pauvres.* In life, so far as I have been able to observe, the passion is apt to lay hold on persons of the most diverse origin and temperament having nothing else in common between them. Of those whose collections have in my time enriched our national museum, including my own department, some of the most notable have been Henry Vaughan, George Salting, John Malcolm of Poltalloch and William Mitchell. Vaughan was the son of a wholesale hatmaker in Southwark, and a man of the most quiet and retiring, devoutly beneficent and charitable disposition. Early travel and inborn instinct implanted in him a love of art which made collecting one of his two absorbing pursuits through all his length of days, the other being charity and good works. To his gifts and bequests half the public galleries in the kingdom, and my own department at the British Museum in particular, owe much of their wealth in the works of Michelangelo, as well as of Turner, Flaxman, Constable and the other English masters of that age. George Salting was the Australian-born son of parents originally Danish, who after an education for very brief terms each at Eton and Oxford, but chiefly at Sydney University, which seemed to promise aptitude for literature and the classics, was diverted by a winter spent at Rome to a passion for the visible and tangible treasures of mediæval, Renaissance, and Oriental art and handicraft. Living the simplest of bachelor lives in chambers at the Thatched House, St. James's, Salting spent practically all his days in the sale-rooms of London and the income of a great fortune, the capital of which

he had himself vastly increased, on the purchase of treasures chiefly in the form of pottery, enamels, bronzes, medals and engraved gems; and in the end he distributed them, as every good collector should, among the various museums of London. Malcolm of Poltalloch on his part was a great highland laird, whose passion as a collector—to a large extent stimulated as well as directed by an inseparable *fidus Achates* in the person of a bachelor friend of education (and I believe origin) partly German, William Mitchell—was for drawings and prints of all schools. The purchase of his treasures for the British Museum after his death almost doubled the importance of the department I had the honour to serve.

Neither is it among collectors and benefactors alone that a museum official finds interesting human objects of study. He finds them, if he has any eye for such studies, among his colleagues no less. Since appointments of officials have come to be entirely by the routine mode of competitive civil service examination, perhaps there is less scope than there used to be for a marked idiosyncrasy to guide a man in the choice of a museum career or to develop itself during its course. But among my contemporaries and seniors there were certainly plenty of such picturesque and salient characters. To name only one or two—who that ever met Richard Garnett (and during the ten years when he was superintendent of the Reading Room every one who frequented it met him as a matter of course) can have forgotten him? The most genially quaint of erudite men, the most helpful, the

most smiling and queerly attractive to look at in spite of his stained teeth and bristling russet stubble of a beard, he was not, I suppose, a trained bibliographer in the full modern sense, but had a vast and varied practical knowledge of books and the most indefatigably obliging courtesy in helping all those who sought his help in their studies. Sedulous as he was in every museum duty, Garnett found time for a vast amount of reading and much miscellaneous critical and biographical writing outside his official work, and has left with all his colleagues a memory at which we cannot forbear to smile, but which we affectionately esteem and honour none the less. A colleague of the same generation but of strongly contrasted type was Woollaston Franks, a man of fortune and of a Cambridge education, who from the beginning, whilst he only learned the necessary minimum of the regular Cambridge studies, had ploughed out a path for himself in the pursuit first of one and then of another branch of archæology, with a marked preference for the antiquities of mediæval England, and before long was appointed head of the newly created department of British and Mediæval Antiquities and Ethnography. One after another he took up new specialities like the study of pottery and porcelain, first English and Continental, then Chinese and Japanese, of Japanese sword-guards and finger-rings, of drinking vessels; of ancient Bactrian and Indian gold ornaments; of book-plates; making himself a master expert in one of these studies after another, and in the end patriotically bequeathing all his collections to the institution of which he was so

great a servant. Franks could if he had chosen have been a great man of the world as well as a great antiquary and museum keeper; but for general society he cared little and was content with the hearty affection and homage of all whom community of pursuits and interests brought within his sphere.

Of such marked and interesting personalities among my senior colleagues at Bloomsbury, the one with whom I was on terms of closest intimacy and of whom I retain the warmest recollection was the keeper of Greek and Roman Antiquities, Charles Newton. This is not a name known far and wide, like most of those I am recalling in the present pages; nor was its bearer in the full sense of the word a man of genius. That is to say he had not the intensity of being, the radiating fire of the spirit, which gives to the personality of genius its power to dominate or enthral. But he had a character, and a very marked character, of his own: his actual achievement was a considerable one in the history of English, nay, of general Western culture, and in the absence of any full or formal biography it is right that some picture of him, as living as may be however brief, should be attempted by one who like myself enjoyed the honour of his regard and the advantage of his teaching. He was my senior by all but thirty years, and I first knew him when I came to London fresh from my Cambridge degree in 1867–68 and threw myself—among other studies which I did my best at the same time to master and to expound in popular reviews and journals—into the special study of classical archæology. Newton had then already

been for seven years Keeper of the Department of Classical Antiquities at the British Museum. He had served in a subordinate post in the same institution for twelve years after his Oxford degree (1840–52), and then for a spell of seven years had held consular office in the Levant, first at Mytilene and then at Rhodes, being charged at the same time with representing the interests of the British Museum in Asiatic Turkey and the islands. The first great stimulus to excavation by Englishmen on the sites of ancient and buried civilizations had been given by the undertakings carried out by Layard between 1842 and 1851, originally on the personal impulse of Stratford Canning (afterwards Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, the "great Eltchi") and next on that of government for the British Museum, at Kouyunjik and Nimrud and other centres of Assyrian and Babylonian empire. It was again with the strong backing of the same all-powerful ambassador that Newton had been enabled, during the years of the Crimean war and those next following, to carry out the most systematic and successful excavations which had ever been undertaken in those parts in search of Greek antiquities and inscriptions. He had been fitted above other men for the task by a natural instinct—a natural affinity, one might almost put it, with the objects of his pursuit—as well as by the most careful training and preparation. A fully equipped Oxford scholar from Shrewsbury and Christchurch, he possessed besides what it had been too much the habit and defect of English scholarship to lack, a strong and well instructed love for the extant remains of Greek

art; while the records of Greek public and private life and usage preserved in lapidary inscriptions at all times interested him and exercised his faculties even more than those handed down in books.

Both these classes of material were capable of being augmented from hour to hour by investigation on the sites of ancient cities and burial-places, and it had been the passion of Newton's life so to augment them. The result of his labours during those responsible years on the coasts and in the islands of the Levant had been to rescue for the study and admiration of the after world, and secure for the enrichment of his museum, all those remains of the renowned Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, the masterwork of the second great school of Athenian sculptors and architects in the fourth century B.C., which lay buried under the buildings of the Turkish town of Budrum: the two noble colossal portrait figures, shattered but restorable, of Mausolos himself and his wife Artemisia; a headless rider on the fragment of a great rearing horse; the unbroken head and forehand of another and huger horse standing with the bronze bit intact in its mouth; many mutilated great guardian lions; many exquisite frieze-fragments, some almost perfectly preserved, of fighting Amazon and Centaur and racing charioteer; beautifully wrought blocks of column, cornice, architrave and capital—Newton's work had been to rescue and secure these, besides such a unique and moving masterpiece of the antique genius as the seated statue of the sorrowing Demeter from Cnidos, and the series of solemn semi-Egyptian seated

figures from the great temple-avenue at Branchidæ, with many treasures more not here to be recounted.

These excavations of Newton's in the fifties, carried out with public money and Government backing, were much the most systematic and most fruitful that had ever been attempted on Greek sites, and did more than anything else to set the example and give the impulse to the series of undertakings in the same kind, more numerous than can be counted, which have been carried out in later years by researchers of almost every civilized nationality. Some of these have been much more highly trained than he in the special and technical study of architecture: but in another speciality, that is in epigraphy or the science of inscriptions, Newton was a master abreast of the foremost. He had a rooted preference for this study, as resting on firm and positive data, over that of the archæology of art, as developed, chiefly in Germany, on speculative and deductive lines which he held to be unsure and often fanciful. After his return from his labours in Asia Minor and appointment as Keeper at the British Museum, Newton by his authority and influence, though no longer by explorations of his own conducting, continued on a great scale the enrichment of his department. Other explorers under his impulse and suggestion discovered and sent home precious remains from Ephesus, Priene, Cyrene, from Sicily and Cyprus: and concurrently with these gains a parsimonious Treasury was induced to provide funds for the purchase, one after another, of nearly all the chief collections formed by continental amateurs and

dealers; the Blacas collection for one; from the great Italian dealer Castellani several collections in succession, besides single acquisitions any one of which was apt to be an event and an excitement in itself; as for instance that magnificent, all but uninjured, bronze colossal head of a goddess found in the farther parts of Armenia, which has been conjectured to have been broken from some famous work, or replica of a work, by Praxiteles, and which stands scarcely rivalled in its kind in any museum of the world.

I have said that Newton had the passion for these things; but in spite of his achievement the word seems hardly suitable to a man of his temperament. Staunch and even tender in kindness towards those he cared for and had learned to trust, he was of a reserved and rather austere habit in ordinary intercourse, and by experience and training had acquired a degree of caution and mistrustfulness with strangers which might easily have been mistaken for cynicism. He had two smiles, one, and I fear the more frequent, cold and sceptical, but another, reserved for his tried friends and for young children, very deeply and touchingly tender. As he moved about with a somewhat shuffling or flinching gait (for his feet did not in later years carry him very well) among the noble damaged marbles at the British Museum, the kinship between him and them seemed to strike obviously upon the eye. True, his tall figure was too spare for that of a rightly proportioned Greek god or demigod or sage, but his head was truly Olympian. The hair grew outward from the parting in rich and waving grizzled masses, to

which corresponded a square grizzled beard somewhat roughly kempt: the brow was intent and deeply corrugated, the features severely handsome save for a broken nose, the result of a fall; but this seemed only to complete his facial likeness to a Greek Zeus injured and imperfectly restored. A great scholar and a great gentleman, he was in all companies a distinguished presence and in all the best was made welcome. His style, in conversation as in writing and lecturing, was marked by a certain old-fashioned dryness and dignity scarcely less telling in its way than the richer colouring of more expansive or more imaginative talkers; and in dealing with pretension whether social or intellectual he had a vein of irony the more effective for being kept scrupulously within the bounds of formal courtesy. On occasion he could not only cuttingly give but generously take a lesson. A much younger colleague in the Museum, then assistant-keeper in the department next to his, had cause once to stand up against him and experience the result. Some rearrangements between the two neighbour departments were in progress, and for a few days the assistant in the department not Newton's was left in charge in the absence of his chief. Newton came along and told him, in the manner of one giving an order, to carry out some of the removals which had been under discussion. He declined: Newton repeated the instruction more peremptorily: he again declined: the same thing happened a third time, and Newton retired with a face of thunder, threatening "Very well, I shall report your conduct to the Trustees." The assistant

waited for some days expecting trouble. But no trouble came; and the only result was that from that day to the end Newton's manner to him became one of friendly warmth and greatly increased regard. Thinking the matter over, he had evidently decided in his own mind that the junior had been quite right in declining to take instructions affecting the department for which he was for the time being responsible from anyone excepting his own chief.

When I first knew him he was only lately beginning to come into the world again after an overwhelming sorrow which left its mark on all his after-life. At the close of his labours in the Levant he had been for a short while British consul at Rome, and had there met Ann Mary Severn, the daughter of Joseph Severn, the devoted painter-friend of Keats. This lady was herself an artist of truly sensitive hand and eye, and by all accounts a person of the utmost charm and sweetness. She and Newton were married in 1860 and lived a life of perfect harmony, she entering helpfully into all his interests and studies, and devoting her talent to the illustration of his books and lectures, until six years later she was suddenly carried away by an illness of a peculiarly painful and tragic character. As she lay unwell one day in her room she saw a workman killed by a fall from a scaffolding reared against an opposite house. The sight was more than in her weakened state she could bear, and she fell from that hour into a wild delirium, in which she could not endure the presence of him she loved best, and from which she was only released by death. He

could never bring himself to speak of her afterwards, but those who knew him best were conscious that his innermost thoughts were always of his lost happiness. Come into the world again, however, he did, and I used to meet him at many places besides the scene of his official duties in the museum; among others at the periodical dinners of the Dilettanti, an ancient and distinguished convivial society dating from the year 1732, which had in its day combined the habit of high carouse with much good work in antiquarian discovery and publication, and still kept and keeps up its reputation in the latter kind and some of its quaint convivial rites and usages, though not its excesses, in the former.

Newton's discoveries in the fifties and his position at the museum afterwards had placed him first by common consent among the working classical archæologists of his time in Europe. But that branch of study had since the days of Winckelmann been much more generally followed and understood among German scholars than among English; and after their triumph and the establishment of their empire in 1870 the Germans, keen, to their credit be it said, in the pursuit and organization of every other science no less than of the sciences of conquest and spoliation—were determined to take a practical lead in archæological research on classic ground. Their first great undertaking was the excavation, by arrangement with the Greek Government, of the site of the ancient temple and sacred enclosure of Zeus at Olympia, a scheme which had been for a while ardently entertained, but never put in hand, by Lord Elgin, and at which a few tenta-

tive scratchings had later been actually made by the French under General Maison. By the winter of 1874–75 this undertaking was in full swing. I was eager to visit and watch it, and with some difficulty persuaded Newton to meet me towards the end of March at Athens in order that we might arrange to travel thence to Olympia together. Some years had gone by since he had last been in the Levant. It was my own first visit to Greek soil. I have tried to convey in another place something of the thrill—for such it must be to every scholar not having a soul of putty—of my first sight of Athens and first days spent there, and shall here only recall a few traits of my elder companion during our trip. Travel in Greece was then very different from what it is now. The isthmus of Corinth had not then been cut by a canal, but had to be crossed by coach. There were no railways in the Peloponnese, and all travel was either by coasting steamer, or by carriage where there existed anything like a road, or else on horseback. The town nearest to the site of Olympia, from which the excavations were approached and supplied, was Pyrgos. Thither we had arranged to go by a coasting steamer from Corinth. We were pacing the shingle of the isthmus in readiness for the boat's early start when to my discomfiture a cold fit fell suddenly upon the spirits of my companion. He began conjuring up a vision of imaginary troubles and treacheries awaiting us on our projected trip, and actually proposed that we should give it up and go back to Athens. I knew him to have shown in the course of his career abundant

coolness and resource in the presence of real danger, and guessed that there had come upon him in the morning chill a mood which is best explained by a passage in his book of *Travels and Discoveries*, telling how he once surprised a Greek servant in the act of robbing him :—

> I have not seen so livid and hideous a complexion since the day when Timoleon Pericles Vlasto was detected stealing coins from the British Museum. This man came to me from Smyrna with an excellent character. He had most engaging manners, and was always thanking me for my goodness to him, and telling me that I was better than a father to him. I have little doubt that he would have cut my throat with the same pleasant smile on his face. People in England wonder how it is that, after a long residence in the East, Europeans become so suspicious, jealous, and generally cantankerous ; but they forget that an Englishman in the Levant is doomed to pass his life surrounded by people who may be described by the ever-recurring phrase applied by Darius to his enemies in the Behistun inscription, " And he was a liar." The very air we breathe in Turkey is impregnated with lies.

It turned out not difficult, however, to talk him out of this momentary mood. We pursued our journey, were landed at Katacolo, the port of Pyrgos, rode to the village of Druva, where the German scientific expedition was installed, were hospitably received, and spent some days studying with intense interest the results of the excavations so far as they had then been carried. From the mere configuration of the ground, with the brook Kladeos, its course marked at that season by flowering Judas-trees, running at an acute angle into the broad shingle-bed of the Alpheios near the foot of the hill Kronion, it was easy enough

to recognize the general plan of the site, the great common centre of ancient Greek Zeus-worship and of athletic and poetic contests and glories. It was not too difficult to reconstruct in the mind's eye the aspect of the walled and consecrated precinct of the Altis, dominant within whose boundaries had stood the great temple of the god, besides his open-air altar and the hundred other temples and altars of Olympia, together with the innumerable multitude of votive and memorial statues, a forest of bronze and marble, which had crowded the intervening spaces. Nay, looking out from the side of the hill Kronion over the windings of the Alpheios, marked here by clouds of drifting dust and here by the shimmer of water, away to the gleaming level of the sea itself, it was hard not to break in your mind's eye the solitude of that sea-line, and to descry in imagination sails converging from the west, and throngs marshalling themselves beside the river-mouth, as when the sons of Hellas were wont to assemble in their galleys for the great anniversary from every state of the mainland and every colony overseas. . . .

But the immediate daily fruits of the excavation were such as to leave little time for dreaming, and to raise in trained minds a hundred absorbing problems. Fragments of sculpture and architecture were coming up as thick as potatoes under the spade: the flying Victory of Paionios, duly identified by its inscribed pedestal; many drums of the columns of the great temple lying regularly in rows as they had fallen outward; the sculptured figures, one after another and all more or less shattered, of the east pediment

of the same temple. Some of these finds seemed to confirm, some very perplexingly to contradict, anticipations formed on the strength of ancient guide-books and histories. The fragments of the east pediment in particular, as then freshly unearthed, afforded one obvious such puzzle. The standard of excellence in pediment groups of the great period had been set in our minds by the figures remaining from the pediments of the Parthenon at Athens, those prime and crowning treasures of the British Museum, with their combination of grandly monumental decorative design and an almost gem-like finish. But here were these Olympian pediments, works of the same period and school, in comparison but roughly blocked out and showing the decorative purpose and quality almost unaccompanied by any fineness of detail. Naturally Newton had in his guarded way much to say and to suggest on these antiquarian problems as each presented itself to us, and naturally his words were received with respectful attention. But it is not these which after the lapse of four-and-forty years remain in my mind. What remains perversely and indelibly fixed there is a trifling little scene which occurred on our way back to Athens. Instead of taking boat again from Katacolo we drove from Pyrgos across the plain of Elis, by such a rough, less than half-made apology for a road as then existed, as far as Patras, the chief port of Northern Peloponnese. About half-way we stopped for a meal at a little hostelry in the village of Ali Tchelebi, near the lakelet of the same name, then beautifully fringed with flowering oleander scrub.

As we sat out after the meal we noticed a great hairy caterpillar near five inches long crawling perseveringly across the yard on some errand of its own. We were watching its progress with a mild interest when suddenly from a shed at one side a lean, long-legged hen came scurrying after it with outstretched neck, and in another moment had with a greedy chuckle gobbled it up. The event tickled the cynical fibres in my old friend's nature, and in a rare vein of smiling, disillusioned worldly wisdom he fell to moralizing upon it as a symbol of the predatory scheme of life in general and human life in particular. As such he would often humorously return to it in talk during after years in London, and it is perhaps this frequency of its laughing recall between us that has helped to keep it printed so ineffaceably on my mind's eye.

But I will end what I have to say about this old friend with a memory of a different stamp. One of the things which had most united us from the first was the desire, which I had begun to cherish even as an undergraduate and which had been almost the guiding motive of Newton's life, to see the study of classical art and archæology, hitherto neglected in our universities, take a regular and recognized place there beside the study of the classical languages and literature. In the years (1876–1884) when I had charge of the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge, my main endeavour had been not so much to enrich its collection of miscellaneous original objects of art as to save out of its revenue a fund for providing the first and indispensable apparatus for archæological study in the shape of a

gallery of casts from antique sculpture. The new gallery was built and stocked, and in April 1884 a representative company came to the ceremony of its formal opening. The Prince of Wales was present, and among the speakers were such practised celebrities as James Russell Lowell, then American minister in London; Lord Houghton; Professor Jebb, who had lately been public orator of the university; and the president of the Royal Academy, Sir Frederic Leighton. I can see and hear them now. Lowell, with his square and vigorous presence and his great square-cut tawny beard already beginning to grizzle, spoke without technical knowledge but with practised readiness and genial good sense as he regretted the absence of a brother diplomat who chanced to be a past master of these subjects (that was the then French ambassador in London, M. Waddington). Lord Houghton, on public occasions always eloquent and elegant in spite of a slipshod habit of dress and person, spoke, with sweeping gestures of the arm and his scarlet gown half slipping off his back, more aptly and graciously even than usual. Jebb, classically pointed and polished both in phrase and delivery, and Leighton, floridly handsome and winning in person and in the use of tongue and brush alike ever gracefully accomplished, were both at their best. But far the most effective speech of the day, despite its somewhat antiquated style and stiff delivery, was Newton's. For many years of his life he had laboured in vain to get his beloved studies officially recognized and admitted into the curriculum of his own university of Oxford. To

see the object achieved at Cambridge, with the certainty that Oxford must soon follow, was to him like a view from Pisgah. His fine, worn and furrowed, now ageing face took a touching look of relief and happiness as he defined and defended with a master's insight the studies to which he had given his life, declaring as he wound up, "I rejoice to have seen this day; it is a day I have waited for, and prayed for, and toiled for—in many lands—and when I looked this morning at the cast of the little figure of Proserpine I myself discovered at Cnidos, I was reminded of her ἄνοδος when she came back from the darkness of Hades into the light of the upper world, and the thought came to me that this was the ἄνοδος of archæology, so long buried in England."

There followed for Newton a time of gradually declining strength, during which his services having tardily received the reward of a public honour, he continued for a while with usefulness and dignity his work both as Keeper at the museum and lecturer at the University of London. The last years before his death were spent in retirement and much needed rest; not without solace from the grateful affection of us who had known under his guarded exterior a spirit the most zealous in research and teaching and a heart the best to be trusted in friendship.

CHAPTER XIII

ON SOME ASPECTS OF ATHENS
(1875)

There is no place where a student is more likely to become absorbed in his special study than at Athens. But in letting himself be so absorbed, though he makes sure of gathering one kind of fruit from his journey, he is in danger of missing another kind. The mind too anxiously bent upon improvement is apt to have no attention left for chance impressions, and it is in the distinctness and variety of chance impressions that one half the good of travelling lies. At home, among familiar scenes, to see much in little things is the privilege either of egoism, whose slightest experiences are of importance to itself, or of genius. The rest of us are less impressionable, and let the thousand small circumstances of to-day go by us all but unawares. But abroad, we all notice and remember little things; there is a strangeness in common sights, sounds, and scents, a vividness in our passing observations; and we carry away, if we are not too dull or too preoccupied, a treasure that we did not count on.

I have only been a fortnight in Athens, and in the way of work, a fortnight could not well yield results worth mentioning. Accordingly of special studies I am not about to speak, only of some general aspects

of the place, and things that strike one there in by-hours. To any one loving Greek literature and art and tradition, the approach, the first sight of Athens, is naturally one of the great moments of life. And few things are better fitted to prepare and work one up for such a moment than the voyage, if you choose that route, from the Ionian islands by way of the isthmus of Corinth. Starting from Zante in the morning, you pass south of and presently leave astern the island-mass of Cephalonia, majestic in the noon-day haze; you steam beneath the Acarnanian headlands, and stop for a while under the mountain that towers, crimson with sunset, above Patras; at twilight you enter between the guarded points of Rhion and Antirrhion, and pass along by night where the snows of Cyllene on the left, and Parnassus on the right, look down on the Corinthian gulf. These landlocked waters are treacherous and subject to hurricanes. What happened to Apollo and his crew on their voyage to Crissa may happen to any one, and did to us. In the middle of the night, after leaving Patras,

So frank a gale there flew out of the west,*

that our skipper was fain to bring his ship to under the lea of a cliff, and there she lay straining and tossing at her moorings for two hours, while the awakened passengers bemoaned themselves. When we came on deck at dawn, as the boat neared the port of Corinth, the sky was low and grey, and the cold gale was still

* This is Chapman's spirited line for the Homeric,—

ἦλθ' ἄνεμος Ζέφυρος μέγας ἐκ Διός αἴσης
λαβρὸς ἐπαιγίζων ἐξ αἰθέρος.

driving the ripple strongly upon the beach; most of us were still staggering from sea-sickness, the most prosaically abject of human calamities; the sense of excitement, of enjoyment, of expectancy, was for the moment utterly extinguished. But during the drive across the isthmus to Kalamaki, the port where one took steam again for Athens, the day grew bright, the mountain distances revealed themselves, the air blew fresh and ringing instead of chill; the deadened faculties began to waken. By the time we were re-embarked, a Homeric hunger had succeeded to the morning's faintness; and this satisfied, one was ready to take in again the glory of the world. It is a three-hours' run down the Saronic gulf from Kalamaki to the Piræus, and all the while your heart is astir within you. The sea which leaps from the prow, and flashes under the following gale, is not sea but a sapphire wine of fabulous colour and intensity. The mountains, with their fainter azure, are mountains of enchantment; far off behind some of those foldings on the right, you know, lie ruins of old fame, Tiryns and Mycenæ and Cleonæ; on the left, the arid precipices of the Megarid descend in sunshine to the blue; in front, the gulf is almost closed by a crowd of steep and lovely coast and island forms which you have not yet learnt to name or distinguish. You want to shout schoolboy quotations to yourself; you want to be alone with your emotions, and cannot bear anything which jars against or checks them. Your fellow-passengers become odious to you. A Greek youth, unctuous, familiar, inquisitive, accosts you for the

twentieth time with an eye to business; a Glasgow tourist prates about the beauties of the Clyde; somebody offers you a cigar; you turn savagely from them all, and make your way forward, where the deck is strewn with third-class passengers wrapped in their sheepskins, and picking your steps, clamber up beside the bowsprit, where you can be alone. The island of Ægina has by this time separated itself from the other mountain groups, and lies in front and to the right; on the left, you cannot at all make out the projections and complications of the coast, but you know that the conical peak the boat is just rounding belongs to the island of Salamis, and are in high suspense for what will come next. You watch and watch, with snatches of Greek and snatches of English poetry ringing in your brain—

> λιπαραὶ καὶ ἰοστέφανοι καὶ ἀοίδιμοι—
> The fruitful immortal anointed adored
> Dear city of men without master or lord—

and presently you swallow something in your throat, and give a shake from head to foot, as the immortal city wears in sight: that is to say, there appears a few miles before you a place in the coast where the higher mountains break back into a sort of amphitheatre, and you discern a little cluster of rocks standing clear in front of them. First you make out but one sharp crag—that must be Lycabettus; next a lower one disengages itself, table-topped and with buildings on it, and that must be—it is—the Acropolis; those buildings are the Parthenon, from thence flashed of yore the spear and helmet of Athene. There is

another half hour, of which you do not take any precise account, before the steamer comes to in the harbour of the Piræus and is surrounded by a shoal of pinnaces bringing on board the health-officers and hotel and custom-house agents. These Piræus boats are painted white, with gunwales striped red and yellow; the harbour is surrounded with white or brightly-tinted buildings; the water quivers with clear colour and reflection; a crystalline and dancing brightness is in the air; as you are rowed to shore, and start to drive from the harbour to the town, you are penetrated with the sense of unaccustomed and radiant day.

This lightness and clearness of the Athenian atmosphere, as it is the thing which strikes you first on landing, so is it that of which you remain most continually sensible. Not the λαμπρότατυς αἰθὴρ of Euripides, not all that poets have sung or travellers told, have fully prepared you for the reality. When day has followed day in which the world has lain flooded with radiance, and on night after night the stars have seemed to hang within reach almost, in unknown, nearer, brighter multitudes, till the spirit has thoroughly dilated itself in the new medium, still you find that habit has not made you insensible to this magic quality of the air. It is forced upon your attention by fresh sights and impressions that occur continually. The old market at the lower end of the town is a great place for one kind of such impressions which has nothing to do with ancient Athens or with your studies, but strikes vividly in upon your passive

observation. Market-stalls and market people in counterchange of intense shadow and light, heaps of glowing oranges, piles of silk stuffs, figures in the scarlet fez and white or blue jacket and white fustanella, make pictures of intense Oriental colour, which you are apt to come upon suddenly, framed in the openings of the houses, as you descend from the Acropolis by one of the many narrow lanes of that quarter. Sometimes, on the other hand, one of these sudden effects of daylight contains a whole revelation on the nature of ancient art. When, in one of the new buildings upon which the masons are at work all over the town —the University, the Academy, the Parliament-house, the Sculpture museum—you chance to see a piece of fresh-carved marble against the sky, it dazzles you with its excessive glitter and whiteness; you understand at once why statues of pure untinted marble would not do in this climate, and why the ancient Greek, to make his groups of outdoor statues tolerable to the eye, must needs have toned and tinted them; and how, further, it is probable that his marble surfaces in general were faced with some preparation which did for them then that which time, subduing the white glitter to a hundred rich diversities between ivory and amber, has done for them now. There is another way in which the Athenian daylight helps you to understand ancient art for the first time. The moment you see shadows like these, strong, sharp, and defined as by a needle's point, but nevertheless full, in the shaded surface, of a blue and bloomy light, you have gained a new revelation as to the powers

and effects both of sculpture and architecture. In the West we know nothing of this daylight, which at the same time cuts out every shadow into the sharpest definition and force of contrast, and floods all that lies within the shadow with a soft and exquisite clearness. Every projection is thrown into intense relief, every play of surface is expressed with the subtlest gradation ; the commonest mason's work looks striking and beautiful.

And if the atmosphere of Athens gives such special effect and brilliancy to various features of the modern town—to the shapes and shadows of cornice, capital, and balcony, or the attire of market-people grouped about their many-coloured wares, still more does the same atmosphere shed enchantment upon the landscape. The aspect of all mountains obeys and changes with the sky, but none that I have seen seem to owe so much of their glory to sky and air as those of Attica. Every one knows in some degree what is the configuration of that noble theatre in the midst of which the city stands. The rocks of Athens rise from a plain which is encompassed on all but the seaward side by the three ramparts of Hymettus, descending to the shore on the south-east, Pentelicus closing in the landward view north-east, and Parnes north-west ; with the lower, nearer range of Aigealos or Daphni-Vouni, cleft in two by the pass of Daphni, running from Parnes to the sea beyond Piræus on the west, and cutting off the view of Eleusis and one half of Salamis. At first you do not think of these hills as either distant or lofty. The clearness with which you can distinguish

every detail of their appearance makes them seem near, and the sense of ample horizon and unhemmed openness in which you breathe makes you feel as if, being near, they could not be high. Except on rare days of cloud, or when the scirocco drives a dusty haze across the world, you can discern every fold and facet of their slopes, you can make out every cleft and watercourse, almost every minute accident of colour and variety of surface on the rock. Nevertheless, it is nearly two hours' walk to the nearest of these ranges—to the first hollows about the base of Hymettus, or to the rise of Daphni in the opposite direction. The summits of Parnes are twenty miles away and nearly five thousand feet high. In other climates, it is only in particular states of the weather that the remote seems so close, and then usually with an effect which is sharp and hard as well as clear. Here the clearness is soft; nothing cuts or glitters, seen through that magic distance; the air has not only a new transparency, so that you can see farther into it than elsewhere, but a new quality, like some crystal of an unknown water, so that to see into is greater glory.

Such a sky does wonders for the land beneath it. The heights are barren and naked, as they always were, and for ages now the barrenness and nakedness has extended to the hollows and to a great part of the plain, where the populous demes once clustered. Here is nothing opulent; here are none of the ornaments of our northern mountains, no green of the meadows or purple of the moors, nothing of what makes splendid the headlands of Wales or Scotland. These ranges

and promontories of sterile limestone have another distinction. Ridge beyond ridge they rear themselves, extend, sink, part, or close, in forms the most admirably harmonious. To watch their mere outlines is a delight and lesson for the eye ; still more to study the modellings of their masses as they lie revealed in a thousand fine gradations of light and pearly shadow. To draw them is as difficult as to draw the Elgin marbles ; and in truth the Athenian sculptor did but carve his goddesses as his mountains had been carven for him from of old time. The colours of them are as austere and delicate as the forms. If here the scar of some old quarry throws a stain, or there the clinging of some thin leafage spreads a bloom, the stain is of gold and the bloom of silver. And whenever, in the general sterility, you find a little moderate verdure—a little moist grass, a cluster of cypresses—or whenever your eye lights upon the one wood of the district, the long olive-grove of the Cephissus, you are struck with a sudden sense of richness, and feel for the moment as though the splendours of the tropics could be nothing to this. So with the flowers ; a few thin tufts of asphodel, the small purple grape-hyacinths, the close-growing mountain-thyme, a knoll sprinkled with red or white anemones, seem to you wonders, and most of all the anemones, which flash upon you as the reddest and the whitest in the world. The affinity of Greek nature with Greek art, its power of producing, in the same way, effects of surpassing richness with means of extreme simplicity and severity, is the thing which the Athenian landscape brings continually home

to you, in details as well as in the general aspect.

In talking of the landscape, one is still talking of Athens; for the town is not so large that it ever shuts you out from the sense of the country. It is curious to notice the different impressions one gets in different cities of the relation of city and country. In London that relation can hardly be said to exist; the town is to our consciousness a world without limits, and we can hardly realize that even from a balloon, or in the survey of a travelling bird, it would be possible to see all round it, and take it in as the inhabited centre of an open champaign. From within, it is but now and then, when some clear wind is blowing, in some chance street, or from some high attic window opening north or south, that the heights of Hampstead or Norwood catch one's eye, and remind one, not without surprise, of the existence of a circumjacent world. Of great cities, Vienna, with its double river, and the mountains to be seen from its many open places, perhaps keeps the sense of the circumjacent most agreeably present to one's mind. Florence, however much smaller, is quite capable, with her narrow streets and beetling palaces, of making one forget for awhile her encompassing Apennines. The new town of Athens is growing fast, and already covers a great deal of ground, but by no means so as to coop one from the outer world; one has not yet to resent a loss of view in consequence of its growth. But one has this to resent, that the view changes, in a certain fashion, as the town grows. The people want stone for building, and they get it where it can be got most conveniently—by blasting in the

nearest heights. The nearest height of all is Lycabettus, a conical peak which dominates the town immediately behind the king's palace ; and the shape of Lycabettus, as the Athenian mariner of old beheld it from the gulf, has been really altered by modern quarrying. It has been, I believe, decided not to quarry any more on the conspicuous, the townward side of this particular peak ; but further back, and on adjacent eminences, the work goes on continuously. Boom, boom, one hears all day, as mine after mine is sprung ; and the fragments rattle down, and a scar is made, and those forms are changed that should stand fast for ever. Lycabettus, and other sacred rocks, are hewn, and suffer transformation, and rise again as the brand-new public building, the Panepistemion and the Boulê—the University and the House of Parliament—of an Athens rejuvenate and complacent. The German scholastic architects, who planned the new town after the War of Liberation, have set an example of style which has been followed in the main, though none of the subsequent buildings are either so vast or so pretentious as the square barrack of a royal palace. What the public buildings and great private houses most remind one of is Munich—a Munich with an added touch of the Oriental in the flat roofs and closed jalousies, and with the advantage of better materials. For the ornamental parts, Pentelicus is at hand with its marble of incomparable quality, and the native masons seem to have an hereditary art in fitting and working it. The stuccoes used for facing most of the wall-surfaces are of pleasant tints, and so, particularly, are the tiles

of the roofs; so that when one looks down over the town from some eminence its colour suits the scene. And when one walks along the great new thoroughfare, planted in boulevard fashion with pepper-trees, the modern Athens seems a place not unstately nor unrefined—until, perhaps, a cloud of hard white dust comes drifting with the wind, and your eyes smart, and your temper changes; and then you may quickly fall into that other mood, which often one cannot resist, and may hate this prosperity and despise this civilization, and wish that, in this place at least, there were no present to thrust itself between you and the past, and feel as if, about the foot of the Acropolis, solitude and hyenas would be better than this crowd, superlatively and offensively modern, for so it somehow strikes you, which struts or saunters before the plate-glass windows.

Quick-witted and hospitable people! it ill becomes one who has shared your kindness, and hopes to share it again, to feel like this. And reason and humanity, as well as gratitude, aver that you have a right to build your new city—a Munich, yes, a Paris of your own, between the Acropolis and the groves of Academe —and to be busy with your parliamentary politics, and more taken up with to-day and its passions than with the past and its memories. But that which reason bids us remember we all the same forget, and continually fall into indignation, into petulance, against this population and its ways. The sight of neo-Greek words over the shop-doors, the sound of a neo-Greek speech the sense of which our self-willed, insular way

of pronunciation has not taught us to catch, the tavern sign of the Nine Muses, the shopkeepers who write up their names Solon and Epaminondas and Alcibiades, the small boy who cries the comic paper 'Aristophanes' with a true twang of the railway platform—all these things seem to us, at such moments, part of a conceited and intolerable travesty of greatness. It cannot but be so; no living present with its trivialities could well seem to us other than the ape and desecrator of that past which has left us almost nothing trivial, almost nothing not ideal. We cannot, try as we may, we cannot really, familiarly, call up to our mind's eye the ancient Greek as he lived, laboured, bartered, laughed, quarrelled, and died; the accidents of history have conspired with the national genius to purge away from his visible record all marks of commonness or vulgarity. We go to that street, laid bare by the spade in recent years, by which the procession used to set out to Eleusis, and where there are on each side the funeral monuments of dead Athenians; and we ask ourselves, what was the real character, what the gestures, fashions, comings and goings, of that domestic life which is commemorated in the carvings of these tombs with such complete apparent naturalness, yet with such serene and inviolate decorum? A mother sits in her chair, and stoops to kiss her departing child and pat its elbow. A man in ripe years, half turning to go, grasps the hand of his seated wife; another speaks to his dog, who leaps up to crave for notice, as he goes out as if for the usual day's labour. Again, a man and wife grasp

hands, while friends behind the chair look on sorrowfully. Hegeso the daughter of Proxenos, so named in the inscription on her tomb, sits placidly, while her maid brings her in a dressing-casket some piece of attire such as a lady might wear when she walked abroad. Thus much of his real life the Greek will show us, but denuded of all flutter and circumstance; he will carve, with many grave and sweet variations, the household good-byes of every day, in order to carry our thoughts, not to every day, but to that one day when those who say good-bye know that there will be no return at evening. Images decorous, indeed, and serene, but none the less moving; for in these simple scenes of farewell and departure there lurks a tenderness so poignant that one's heart is tightened and the tears come into one's eyes as one looks at them. Thus to express, in the familiar, everything but its familiarity—with so simple a spectacle thus to move and solemnize us—to show us nothing but the usual, and at the same time lift and chasten us from usual thoughts—what words can estimate, what musings fathom, that art of arts?

And should one be blamed for being impatient, if, when one is absorbed in this mystery of the Hellenic genius, shouts or chatter interrupt one's musings, and boys come rioting and pelting each other among the tombs, or trivial-seeming sons and daughters of contemporary Hellas pass gossipingly? There is at least one place where one can be nearly sure of escaping the opportunities of the present, and realizing, as the religious seek to realize, that absorption which life

and traffic elsewhere interrupt; that is the peak of Lycabettus, just above the town. I used to sit every morning under a rock near the top of Lycabettus, and let the view engrave itself by repetition upon my senses. You look down over Athens, down over the Acropolis dominating Athens, and thence over a space of basking plain to the gulf, and beyond the gulf, to the long faint-blue barrier, many-peaked, of the Argive mountains. The hither shore-line of the gulf, about five miles away, stretches all across the view, with moderate indentures and promontories on the side nearest Salamis and the spires of Aigealos (and on this side are the white buildings of the Piræus clustering at the sea's edge), and with a more even sweep in the direction of Hymettus on the left. Towards the centre is one chief indenture, the Bay of Phalerum; of this the curve just coincides, in the view, with the table line of the Acropolis, so as to detach the Parthenon against a background of sea. Solitary stands that pillared stateliness, glittering white against the profound Ægean blue. Nearly straight over the Acropolis, the island of Ægina, softened and darkened with distance, lifts a lovely mountain outline, and dimly behind Ægina another island, Poros, heaves a grand shoulder that we can but half distinguish from the many-folded ranges of the Argive mainland. The gulf, where it widens towards the open Mediterranean, lies misty under the morning sun, and passes thence through a long gradation from east to west into a blueness which is blackness almost, so profound, so intense is the colour, where

its last inlets lie branching beneath the sunlit precipices of Salamis. Salamis, an island of many barren peaks, is flooded with sunlight on all its southern and eastern slopes. Beyond it stretch again the masses of the Peloponnesian mountains, and farthest of all one crest of pure and gleaming snow, the crest of Arcadian Cyllene.

All of the living and the present which reaches you here is the sound sent up from below. The sounds, the cries of Athens, are discordant enough when you are among them, and are not limited to the town. Donkeys are much used in Attic husbandry, and the Attic donkey is notorious for braying incessantly. But the cries of the market and the news-vendors, the braying of donkeys about the farms, the calling of cavalry bugles, and one high clear note most continuous of all, the ring of the masons' hammers upon the marble they are fashioning—all these sounds, through that magic air, ascend to you fused and musically softened, and make no jarring or inharmonious accompaniment to your most rapt reflections.

CHAPTER XIV

EDWARD JOHN TRELAWNY

It was in Newton's company, in the month of February, 1881, that I had my only meeting with this remarkable survivor of the great days and great men of the opening century. To us of a later generation, or rather of several successive generations, Trelawny had become a personage legendary while he yet lived. We all knew thus much about him, that being the younger son of an old Cornish stock, endowed by nature with an ungovernable spirit and extraordinary bodily strength and hardihood, he had in boyhood been first expelled from school and then, at about twenty, a runaway from the King's Navy: next for a year or two a comrade and leader of privateers, scarcely to be distinguished from pirates, in the Eastern seas (though this phase of his career may perhaps be partly mythical); and next, for a few more years, to quote his own words, "a shackled, care-worn and spirit-broken man of the civilized West." That next had come the chance, so happy for his life and fame, which made him first the associate of Shelley and Byron in Tuscany, and of Shelley in especial the ardent admirer and friend—the man who last spoke to the poet in life and who snatched his heart out of the pyre which consumed

his remains—and then, when Shelley was gone, the companion of Byron on his expedition in aid of Greek liberty. Both before and after Byron's death, Trelawny was the trusted lieutenant of the famous Greek chieftain Odysseus, a partisan at war equally with the Turk and with the provisional native Government at Athens, and was made the victim of an attempted assassination while left in charge of that chieftain's treasure in his cavern fortress on Mount Olympus. After his recovery and a few years spent in the Ionian Islands, the next phase of his life was that of a man of leisure and letters at Florence, the most confidential friend of Shelley's widow; bent for a while himself upon writing Shelley's life, and when he was foiled in that hope, turning to weave the story of his own wild early days into a thrilling, inextricable, ultra-romantic blend of fact and fiction in his book *The Adventures of a Younger Son.* He reappears next as once more a traveller performing feats of strength and endurance in the wilder regions of America both North and South —feats unrecorded or vaguely recorded except that one feat of swimming across the rapids below Niagara, which he has himself described in what in his own energetic, untutored way of writing is perhaps his masterpiece. For some seasons thereafter he played his part as a conspicuous member of London society, made much of by fashionable folk in spite—or perhaps because—of his scorn of social rules and conventions. Then for another period he lived in the London suburbs as something of a recluse and in South Wales as a country gentleman and hardworking practical

farmer and gardener, but never for very long without some scandal attending his name, for of all laws the marriage laws were those he respected least. Then he became for a second time an author, recounting his relations with Shelley and Byron and his experiences in Greece with a remarkable gift both of human presentment and of narrative: and thereafter lived on and on, for the most part in retirement in the country, until of his own memorable age he had become almost the last survivor, and an object of curiosity and pilgrimage to successions of younger men and women seeking in their minds or writings to reconstruct it.

Naturally I had always had the wish to see this veteran, and at the date I have mentioned the opportunity came. Newton and I were the guests for a winter week-end of our friends Captain and Lady Alice Gaisford in their Sussex home, distant about a mile from the cottage in the village of Sompting where Trelawny had then long been living. Our host, a brother Dilettante of Newton's and mine, was a son of the once famous Greek scholar and dean of Christ Church, Thomas Gaisford, and was himself a fine type of handsome, chivalrous, cultivated English gentleman. He was on terms of friendly regard and intercourse—under some degree of protest, if I remember aright, from Lady Alice—with the old rebel his neighbour, and by previous arrangement walked over with us and introduced us. The house where Trelawny lived was a large cottage painted red and set back a little way on the left-hand side of the road, not far from the entrance

to the village. The veteran received us in a small, old-fashioned room on the ground floor, where he sat in an arm-chair with a couple of black-and-tan terriers playing about his feet. I had been accustomed to hear much of his extraordinary vigour. He had always been of abstemious habits, and although past eighty-eight, and a water-drinker, and although he had still inside him one of the two bullets which had been lodged there by the assassin Fenton during the Greek war of liberation, he was nevertheless, it was said, so strong that he had only lately given up the habit of bathing in the sea in all seasons, and of warming himself on the coldest mornings, not at the fire, which he refused to have lighted before noon, but by the exercise of chopping wood. I was therefore somewhat surprised to perceive in him at first sight all the appearances of decrepitude. He scarcely moved himself in his chair on our entrance, but sat in a shrunken attitude, with his hands on his knees, speaking little, and as if he could only fix his attention by an effort. He wore an embroidered red cap, of the unbecoming shape in use in Byron's day, with a stiff projecting peak. His head thus appeared to no advantage; nevertheless in the ashen colour of the face, the rough grey hair and beard and firmly modelled mouth set slightly awry, in the hard, clear, handsome aquiline profile (for the nose, though not long, was of marked aquiline shape), and in the masterful, scowling grey eye, there were traces of something both more distinguished and more formidable than is seen in Sir John Millais's well-known likeness of him as an old seaman in his

picture " The North-West Passage "—a likeness with which the sitter himself was much dissatisfied.

The talk ran at first on commonplace matters and mutual acquaintances. In its course the downright old man denounced as " lies " the ordinary formulas of social politeness and solicitude. His voice was at first weak and muffled; at the same time his scorn of conventions seemed to declare itself in a certain bluntness and bluffness of utterance, and in tricks of pronunciation such as saying " strenth " for " strength" and sounding " put " with the vowel short as in " shut." Was this ruggedness of speech and manner, I could not help asking myself, quite genuine and natural in a gentleman born, who, rough as had been his early experiences, had nevertheless lived familiarly among equals whenever he chose; or had it been at first wilfully adopted and become by degrees a second nature? By and by he began to rouse himself, and then his conversation became, at least at intervals, curiously impressive. His moral and social recklessness, his defiance of current opinions, his turbulent energy, his sure eye for character and his no less sure instinct for literature, all made themselves felt, along with the extraordinary interest of his experiences. From time to time he would rise, almost bound, up in his chair, with his eyes fastened on yours like a vice, and in tones of incredible power would roar what he had to say into your face. I never heard in human conversation a voice so energetic as that which burst from the old man in these explosions; explosions which subsided quickly, and in the intervals of which

his accents were quiet and muffled as before. When the personal preliminaries were over we talked of current politics. It was the hour when the long negotiations between the British generals and administrators and the Boer leaders had failed, and the operations of the Transvaal war (of 1881) were in full swing. Trelawny defiantly declared his hope that the English would be beaten. "If I were a younger man," he shouted in a strong *crescendo*, "I would go and fight for the Boers—fight for the Boers—fight for the Boers."

There was seeming imminent at the same hour another war nearer home, though not touching us so deeply. Greece had been pressing for the fulfilment by Turkey of those clauses of the Treaty of Berlin which handed over to her the provinces of Thessaly and Epirus. Turkish diplomacy had resisted by all the devices of obstinacy and cunning known to it; and the great Powers, each afraid of throwing Turkey into the arms of the other, had failed to insist, and striven, so far vainly, to effect a settlement by compromise. Greece was preparing for war—and if war broke out, which side of the two, one of us asked, did Trelawny think would win. Who could tell? he asked; the Greeks had never, for two thousand years, faced an enemy in the open field. All their successes in the war of liberation had been won in guerilla fighting: the Turkish squadrons used to march in column along the plains, when the Greek sharpshooters would line the hills and harass or destroy them without exposing themselves. I had lately been re-reading Trelawny's *Records of Shelley, Byron, etc.*, and this

answer reminded me of one of its most striking passages, and showed me how entirely the old man was thinking in the light of his own experiences during the war of liberation some fifty-five years earlier. Here is the passage in question :—

> On our way to Corinth, we passed through the defiles of Dervenakia ; our road was a mere mule-path for about two leagues, winding along in the bed of a brook, flanked by rugged precipices. In this gorge, and a more rugged path above it, a large Ottoman force, principally cavalry, had been stopped, in the previous autumn, by barricades of rocks and trees, and slaughtered like droves of cattle by the wild and exasperated Greeks. It was a perfect picture of the war, and told its own story ; the sagacity of the nimble-footed Greeks, and the hopeless stupidity of the Turkish commanders, were palpable : detached from the heaps of dead, we saw the skeletons of some bold riders who had attempted to scale the acclivities, still astride the skeletons of their horses, and in the rear, as if in the attempt to back out of the fray, the bleached bones of the negroes' hands still holding the hair ropes attached to the skulls of their camels—death like sleep is a strange posture-master. There were grouped in a narrow space five thousand or more skeletons of men, horses, camels, and mules ; vultures had eaten their flesh, and the sun had bleached their bones.

Continuing on the same subject, one of us asked, would not Mr. Trelawny like to go and fight for Greece now, as he had fought for her before ? No, if after leaving Greece he had ever gone back there again he would without doubt have been assassinated. Why ? For the sake of plunder ; because he, and he alone, knew the caves and hiding-places where the chief Odysseus had deposited his treasure. Here again the veteran was evidently thinking in terms of his bygone

experience. It was by the fabulous accounts of the wealth accumulated by Odysseus in his cavern on Mount Olympus that the Scotsman Fenton and his accomplice Whitcombe had been lured to their act of treachery. But granting that those hoards still remained untouched, and that Trelawny was the only man knowing the secret of their hiding-place, in what way an assassin in later times could possibly have profited by his death was not apparent; neither did we press the point. Speaking of the actual attempt made on his life in 1825, Trelawny described how his Hungarian servant, standing on guard at the mouth of the cave, confronted and shot the would-be assassin Fenton, who was attempting to escape from within it under the pretext that what had just happened there was a dreadful accident. One of us, referring to the shot with which Fenton wounded Trelawny not to that with which the Hungarian servant killed Fenton, asked if it had not been in the back, which as a matter of fact it was; whereupon Trelawny, misunderstanding the question and still thinking of the action of the Hungarian, rose with a shout and a flash and called out, "No, in the face, in the face."

Passing to the circumstances of Shelley's death in 1822, Trelawny, after showing us the scar where he had burned his hand in plucking the poet's heart out of the ashes, detailed at length his reasons for believing that the sinking of Shelley's boat the "Don Juan" (rechristened the "Ariel"), in the squall after she had left Leghorn Harbour, was due to foul play. He repeated

without variation the account of the matter given in his published volume of *Records*, dwelling particularly on the circumstance that he had been himself prevented from putting out in company with his friends in Byron's schooner "The Bolivar" by warnings of the quarantine to which he would thereby make himself liable, addressed to him from the pier by men affecting to be custom-house officers but who turned out not to be custom-house officers after all. And he insisted on the fact that when the wreck of the "Ariel" was brought to the surface her bows were found to be stoven in. This belief that the "Ariel" had not gone down by accident in the squall but been deliberately run down, was one which had by degrees gained complete possession of Trelawny's mind, but is not shared by those who have inquired most carefully into the evidences.

Being then, as always, especially interested in all that concerns either Keats or Landor, I tried to lead the old man's thoughts toward the days (about 1828–30) when he was living at Florence in the intimacy both of Keats's friend Charles Brown and of Landor himself. Knowing that it was by a hint of Trelawny's that Brown had been induced to adopt a second Christian name, Armitage, so that he might be better distinguished from the general tribe of Browns, and that on the other hand it was by Brown's suggestion and permission that Trelawny had prefixed to many of the chapters of his *Adventures of a Younger Son* mottoes from Keats's poetry both published and unpublished, I had hoped to get from the old man a more living image of Brown's person and character than I had yet

been able to form.* I was very desirous also to hear what Trelawny might have to say of that other stiff-backed and strong-lunged type of haughty British independence and self-will, Walter Savage Landor, his senior by some two and twenty years. The two had been actually living together at Florence, I knew, at the time when Landor had made of Trelawny's adventures during the Greek War of Independence the subject of one of the most highly wrought of his *Imaginary Conversations*. The scene is laid in the fortified cavern of the chief Odysseus on Mount Parnassus, and the persons of the dialogue, besides the rebel chief himself, are his mother Acrive, his young daughter Tersitza, and Trelawny. In the course of the adventure in the cavern Trelawny had married this girl Tersitza, then barely past childhood, and had brought her with him when he left Greece to settle for a while in Italy. Subsequently, as was his way with wives real or nominal, he cast her off, sending her back to her own country, but keeping with him the daughter of their union, Zella, who grew up under his care to womanhood and married comfortably. The references to this daughter in Trelawny's posthumously published letters do him, it should be said, nothing but credit.†

* The best and liveliest material at present extant is to be found in the memoir prefixed by the late Sir Charles Dilke to the collected papers of his grandfather (*Papers of a Critic*, vol. i, pp. 3–17).

† See *Letters of Edward John Trelawny*, ed. H. Buxton Forman, C.B., Oxford University Press, 1910. These letters prove, had proof been needed, how absolutely groundless is the horrid slander concerning his dealings in this matter to which publicity was given in W. W. Sharp's *Life of Severn*, pp. 264–5.

Tersitza herself also married again some years after Trelawny had discarded her. Whether she had been still living with him in Italy at the date when Landor wrote the *Conversation* in which the two bear part I did not, and do not, know, and should much have liked to learn. At any rate Landor, knowing his Trelawny intimately and writing soon after the events, has chosen to invest their loves with a character exquisitely ingenuous and idyllically ideal, making of Trelawny as lover a personage possibly true to the life, but totally unlike anything one had otherwise ever heard or conceived of him.*

But my fishing for talk from the old man either as to Charles Brown or as to Landor was vain. Of Brown he had nothing to say; and concerning Landor—"a remarkable man, a remarkable man," he repeated several times, but would not be drawn into further comment except in regard to the mistake Landor had made in overrating Southey. Some general remarks on poets and poetry ensuing, Trelawny declared his great admiration for William Blake, whose work, unread and ignored among the associates of his youth, had only in later years become known to him through the publication of Gilchrist's *Life* and Rossetti's reprints. He proceeded to recite standing, with the full force of his tremendous voice, some stanzas of Blake's poem "London" from the *Songs of Experience*:—

* The reader who thinks of turning to this dialogue for himself should perhaps be warned that the charming part of it is only in a few pages at the beginning, while the rest discusses the Greek politics of the hour in a strain superlatively tedious.

In every cry of every man,
In every infant's cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forged manacles I hear,—

and so forth.

By this time we had sat with our entertainer a long while; and I could see by the impatient demeanour of the two terriers that we had outstayed the hour at which they expected their master to take them out walking. When we rose to go he accompanied us into the hall. Newton, in shaking hands, congratulated him on looking so very well considering his age, and then turned to put on his coat: whereupon I could hear the old man, standing behind him, and conscious no doubt of his own fast declining health, growl to himself "'S'very well, s'very well': that's the kind o' lies I was talking of: lies, lies, lies." His last words to us were nevertheless kindly. It did not need the notes, which on this single exceptional occasion I took at the time, to keep vivid in my mind the image of this hard-bitten, keen-visaged, bull-voiced, rich-memoried veteran as he stood grumbling, but not unfriendly, on his door-step. To have shaken the hand which plucked Shelley's heart out of the ashes was an experience one was not likely to forget. Scarcely more than six months later he died, and his remains were removed to Rome to be buried in the grave he had long ago secured for himself beside Shelley's. In like manner Joseph Severn, dying at Rome some thirteen months before, had after an interval of all but sixty years been laid to rest beside his own poet-friend, Keats:

and with the deaths of these two, Trelawny and Severn, the great romantic age seemed to many of us to have receded out of living touch and reach into a past newly intangible and remote.

CHAPTER XV

VICTOR HUGO

With this chief poet and romance-writer of his nation and generation, this world-famous great master of the sublime and tender and (for the word must out) of the preposterous, it was my privilege to come into personal touch soon after the calamities of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870–1 and the poet's return from exile. I used to be often in Paris in those days, and among my friends there the most intimate was Philippe Burty, a fine and subtle master in the same craft of art-criticism as I was trying to ply at home. Burty ought to hold a permanent place in the history of that craft, if only as one of those who, in alliance with the great financier-collector Cernuschi, first brought the love and understanding of Japanese art, in all its forms, into fashion among Parisian amateurs and thence by degrees among the general public. He was a man of exquisite perceptions and sensibilities, with a purring and coaxing softness of manner under which lay much genuine affectionateness as well as an enthusiastic and discriminating love of art: and not only these but a staunch courage, proved throughout the horrors of the siege and the fierce political struggles which followed them. In the days of the re-actionary

Bordeaux Assembly and the *république militante* he was a warm adherent, unshaken by the ghastly interlude of the Commune, of the liberal causes and of their leaders, and was held in equal regard by the poet-seer Hugo and the great parliamentary champion Gambetta. Hence his recommendation secured me a welcome in the quarters where I most desired it. He took me once or twice to see Victor Hugo during the master's brief return to Paris immediately after the signature of peace with Germany (February-March 1871). Then ensued the outbreaks of revolution and re-action—the Commune and its bloody suppression followed by the presidency of Marshal Macmahon—during which Hugo could not make France his home but had once more to withdraw, first to Brussels and then for a while again to Guernsey. Meantime he was busy upon his volume *L'Année Terrible*, embodying in every passionate and high-pitched mood of lyric, elegy, narrative, invective and satire alternately the emotions he had endured during the recent tragedies of his country. The volume appeared early in the summer of 1872. I reviewed it as well as I could in an English magazine, and through our common friend Burty sent a copy of the review to the master, holding such offering to be due as an act of courtesy though knowing well that he could not read my attempt; for his knowledge of English was as vague and wild as is to be inferred, for instance, from his christening an English character in one of his novels Tom-Jim-Jack and from his imagining that the Firth of Forth means *La première de la quatrième*. Burty carried out my

request, and I have before me the letter in which he tells me so, expressing at the same time his wish that he were himself a better English scholar; assuring me that the master had been much touched with some words in my last paragraph when they were translated to him; telling further how he, Victor Hugo, was on the point of withdrawing again to Guernsey from the too distracting calls upon his time and strength in Paris; and ending with some interesting remarks on the way in which during his brief return Hugo had recovered the poetic ascendancy over younger minds which in his absence had been usurped by newer poets such as Baudelaire and Leconte de Lisle.*

* Burty's letter gives so close and clear a view of the phase which French critical opinion was passing through at this juncture that the reader may care to have the text of the relevant passages before him :—

"J'ai reçu votre étude sur *L'Année Terrible*. Je l'ai lue avec un réel intérêt, regrettant toujours que mon peu de pratique de la langue anglaise me fasse évidemment passer sur des délicatesses de langue sans les apprécier. Mais je crois avoir saisi l'esprit du fond qui est sain et généreux. Je l'ai porté hier soir à M. Victor Hugo et lui ai lu le dernier paragraphe et il en a été fort touché. Il quitte Paris tout prochainement, peut-être demain. Il ne peut donc vous remercier d'ici mais il le fera aussitot arrivé à Guernsey, il vous adressera la lettre au bureau même du journal. Je suis très heureux d'avoir été l'instrument de votre rencontre. . . . Les correspondances, les visites, les demandes de secours, l'accablent. Il a perdu tout son hiver, se couchant fort tard et ne pouvant plus ; comme à Guernsey, jouir du grand travail du matin. Je ne puis que l'approuver, mais j'en suis bien attristé. Personnellement, je crois qu'il m'aimait. Mais surtout son goût se retrempait dans l'atmosphère toute spéciale de Paris. Son attitude politique était

The crisis through which, after the lapse of fifty years, Western civilization is once more passing, has inevitably thrust into the foreground of all our thoughts many of the same grim world-problems as in those days most exercised the poet, including that ancient, tragical, inveterate historic conflict of Germany against France, and that, universal and immeasurably more inveterate still, of Have-not against Have. Will the reader pardon me if, in order to revive for him the special atmosphere of those days and the scope and character of the work it inspired in Hugo, I reprint here some paragraphs from my review?

In these leaves written with a proud spirit and with truth, these pages of mourning, battle, and affright, if there has gone forth against my will the voice of anguish, if I have cried with the cry of torture, or so much as once denied my Hope, let that voice of my sobbing be stifled and unheard; I cancel the cry, I

---

excellente, enfin il avait reconquis sur le groupe des jeunes poëtes de talent l'ascendant que durant son exile avaient pris Baudelaire et Leconte de Lisle, hommes d'une réelle valeur, mais incapables de vues aussi hautes, aussi fécondes que celles de Hugo. La présence réelle est un dogme dans la vie comme dans la catholicisme."

The master's own letter of acknowledgment followed, but is a piece of merely polite formality:—

"Hautville House,
8 *Sept.* 1872.

Cher Monsieur Sidney Colvin,—

Vous avez voulu me laisser à votre passage le plus gracieux souvenir. Vous avez écrit sur *L'Année Terrible* une grande et belle page, d'une haute portée et d'une vraie élégance. Je vous remercie par mon plus cordial serrement de main.

Victor Hugo."

erase the word and unsay it.' That is the courageous way in which M. Victor Hugo, towards the end of his new poem, takes up his old sanguine prophecy of human and universal progress. "Paris is the city of destiny and of the dawn, the seat of the future and of light, the travailing mother of the To Be; she has loved much and suffered much; envied be her calamities; fair is her fate, for she bleeds for mankind, and her crown of thorns shall turn in the fulness of time to an undying aureole in the sight of the nations." —And so on, and again and again. The same confession of faith is amplified and re-iterated through page upon page of pompous imagery and passionate declamation; amid the mass of which there come and go such lights of tenderness and power as thrill the spirit from time to time with the sense of incandescent genius, a revelation of the inmost sanctuary of poetry. The creed has two articles. The poet says: "I believe in God the Spirit of Justice, who is one with the Ideal, Conscience, Liberty; who is the Soul of our Soul, the vast Unknown behind all religions, the highest Right, the universal Law, the supreme Immovable, the dazzling incomprehensible All. And I believe in Paris, which is the city of God, the champion of Justice, the seat of Conscience, the martyr of Liberty, the lamp of Reason, the inextinguishable hearth of the Soul. . . . When Paris founders, faith turns to doubt; zero is the sum of things; the goal of our journeying is naught. But once more—no; the heart beats high again; the city shall survive, shall renew her mighty youth; creation shall not prove a mockery; the pillar of light shall not be a gibbet of shame; there shall not be poison in the fields, the woods, the flowers; history shall not be a frantic and furious chaos of fatalities; the world shall not be a dismal indictment against its Maker; comets shall not need to wring their hair. *I* to doubt the issue! *I* to deny the human progress which is the pivot of the vast movement of the welded universe! *I*, the watcher for the dayspring, to despond because the night is long! Nay, I have done my duty: I suffer and am glad: I march on, knowing that nought of all is false, knowing that my hope is sure, and steadfast is the firmament. And I bid ye hope with me, all ye that love and are cast down:

and I bear ye witness that the unknown Being who scatters abroad splendours, flowers, universes, and takes no count; who pours forth stars, winds, and seasons as from ever-open granaries; who gives forth everlastingly to sky-piercing mountains and dyke-devouring seas the gifts of azure and lightning and daylight and the sky; who floods space with the torrents of light, life, and love —I bear ye witness that He who dieth not and passeth not away, who spread the book of the world which priests mis-spell, who gave beauty for the vesture of the Absolute, who is real despite of doubt and true despite of tales—I bear ye witness that He, the Eternal, the Infinite, is not as a riddle having no key." But how turn the resounding and heroical French verse into cool English prose? . . .

The democratic philosopher, recurring to the last overwhelming plébiscite of France in favour of the Empire, saves his faith by going over the old tale of the difference between the People, before whom he bows, and the Populace, whom he despises. From the chaos of the multitude there can spring fine flashes; but let an evil wind blow, and what then? The people that surged about Gracchus at the rostrum, that made the strength of Leonidas and Winkelried (says the poet, plunging at large, as is his way, hither and thither into history), of Washington, Bolivar, and Manin, of Garibaldi as he marched a Homeric hero among the Theocritean hills, of the Convention when it held head against thirty kings, and all Europe broke in froth against the pensive grenadiers of Sambre-et-Meuse—hail once and again to *that* sovereign people! But when the priest-driven mob murders honour in Coligny and reason in Ramus, insults the severed head of Charlotte Corday, spits upon Aristides, Jesus, Zeno, Bruno, Columbus, Joan of Arc —then it is the populace, the many-headed; then it is blind and maddened numbers; then the tyrant All is as bad as the tyrant One. And though all men vote for Cæsar, the prophet will have them wrong; no majority shall cow his conscience; he will say that the world goes ill, and wait until this tyranny be overpast. He will bend his ear to the tombs of the just of old who threw off life rather than bear it with dishonour; he will ask *ces purs tré-*

passés how long it is fit he should bear the load. Last comes the fine image of the snow-storm: "What is it falling round about us in the darkness? Oh, the millions of snow-flakes, and millions again! Oh, the blackness! Oh, the snow!—death to any that falls asleep in it, dim leveller of things, covering the mountains, covering the fields, covering the towns, whitening over the loathsome sewer-mouth, filling heaven with avalanche! How to find the way where all is treachery?" "Ah, but where will all the whiteness be, what will have become of the shroud, to-morrow, once the sun shall have risen an hour?"

August, 1870, is the first month, and gives its name to the first section, of the *Terrible Year* proper. We are admitted to the meditations of Napoleon the Little, who, being a mole and blind, imagines that he is working in the dark and that his minings are concealed; and says to himself that now is his time, while the nations are blinking, to turn true Charlemagne instead of gingerbread Buonaparte, to strike his blow for European supremacy, and put everything upon the hazard of the die. Out upon the suicide, fumbling blindly to his doom, and taking the proud army of France with him, to lead her without stores, without commanders, into the snare! Do books tell of another *felo-de-se* like this?—and once more we are off again over all history and geography for the answer. An Indian fakir letting the vermin devour his body that his soul may go to Paradise; a coral fisher imperilled among Liparæan reefs; Green in his balloon; Alexander marching to Persia, and Trajan to Dacia—all these, anybody and everybody who ever ran a risk, ran it for a purpose; but a knave going out of his way to ruin, a Damocles breaking the thread which kept the sword from falling, a mountebank emperor cutting off his head to keep on his crown—whoever saw or heard of the like? It was in order that Destiny might be fulfilled—that this man, being crime incarnate, being the prince of paltriness and the pickpocket of potentates, might have such a fall as that the common sewer itself must receive his carcase with shame. . . . And so we come to Sedan—we hear how in the fatal valley, amid the shock of furious hosts, in the midst of thunder, in the hell of slaughter

and the rain of iron, when all were drunk with the smoke of blood and no man thought but of battle, amid the bellowing of the human hecatombs and the angry clangour of the trumpet, suddenly from one voice broke the monstrous petition : " Let me live ! " Then all was over ; a bandit, a bandit had surrendered the sword of Gaul and of France, of Brennus and of Clovis, had belied the mighty memories of old, had disgraced " the haughty group of battles " from Chalons and Tolbiac to Wagram and Eylau ; henceforth Agincourt shall smile, Ramilies and Trafalgar shall be pleasant memories ; there shall be solace in the thought of Blenheim or Rossbach ; Sedan shall be the only word of shame. The poetry runs very high throughout this passage of the battle, and culminates with an astonishing effect of rhetorical grandeur in the resonant catalogue of proper names—the personified Battles with lightning flashing from their brows and wings, the historic heroes from Heristal to Napoleon—that are said to give up their sword upon this day of humiliation.

The prospect of a siege, implying a death-struggle between the two nations, opens the chapter of September with one of the finest things in the book. " Choice between the Two Nations " it is called ; and the poet lets his thoughts range, as they might in time of peace and amity, over the glories and excellences of Germany. There is no greater nation, he says ; the blue-eyed Teuton is grand to think of among the confused commencements of European civilization. Germany wrought order out of the clash of a hundred barbarous nationalities ; Germany has been the bulwark of the world—has confronted Cæsar with Arminius and the Papacy with Luther ; German has had Vitikind as France has had Charlemagne—and even Charlemagne was a little of a German (alas ! alas ! professors English and Prussian, and zealots of historic fact ! is *that* all you can get granted, and at this time of day ?)—Greece has Homer ; Germany has Beethoven ; Germany has music for her breath, and blends in her mighty symphonies the eagle's scream and the trilling of the lark. Germany has her castled crags and verdant meadows ; her blonde maidens are like angels as they play on the zither at eventide. Her landscape is peopled with

heroic legends; the Hartz, the Taunus, the Black Forest, are mystical with hauntings of prophet and demon; the trees beside the banks of Neckar are full of fairies by moonlight. "Germans your tombs are like trophies, your fields are full of mighty bones; Germans," cries the French poet, putting the climax to this catalogue of renown, "be proud and lift up your heads; for Germany is potent and superb." And then he turns to his country, and cries—"My Mother!" All that praise and more to Germany; to France, the cry of her son—"*O ma mère!*" That is a stroke of rhetoric, of obvious literary artifice if you will, but still of the artifice which is full of genius and passion: the like comes with a like effect in the dramatic writing of this prince of modern playwrights. An immense accumulation of pleadings, of arguments, of admissions, or whatever it may be, is balanced in a moment with three sudden and pregnant words, a cry from the heart which outweighs all reasoning, a thought from the core of things which scatters with a breath all accumulations of commonplace expostulation or conjecture round about them. At the latter end of the poem a similar turn is given, a similar bridle put by the poet upon his natural volubility, in a passage referring to the burning of buildings by the hunted Parisians of the Commune. "You set fire to the Library?" asks the poet. "Yes, I did," says the petroleur. Then expostulation: "But it is a crime against yourself and your own soul; it is your own treasure and heritage you are consuming. Books are the champions of progress and the poor. What, turn against your best friends! fling a torch amid the Homers, the Jobs, the Platos, the Dantes, the Molières, the Miltons, the Voltaires, the Beccarias! waste the records of these arch enemies of war, famine, and the scaffold, cruelty and prejudice, pride and wrath, evil and slavery, kings and emperors! What, throw away your own cure, your only hope and wealth!" Then comes the answer: "*But I cannot read!*" The "*Je ne sais pas lire*" of the incendiary outbalances, in its concentrated reproach against society, the whole magazine of reproaches which society can bring to bear against the incendiary.

The death-struggle once fairly engaged, the poet can see no

longer any good or any justice among the enemies of his country. They in their turn are bandits—powers of darkness leagued together to extinguish the light of the world, feudal barbarians bent with a vindictive instinct on the suppression of the city of the Idea. Berlin is incarnate evil, Paris is incarnate good ; Corporal William is as bad as pickpocket Louis. It has become a contest of night and day ; it is a host of robbers, locusts, devourers in the dark, that have come forth to prey upon the sacred place left defenceless. History shall hold the marauders up to perpetual shame ; "those princes" shall be names of everlasting reproach ; there is nothing to take away from the city who girds herself to resistance the whiteness of her fame, nothing to redeem the blackness of the infamy of those who assail her. She is a pure virgin whose body may fall into the hands of the ravisher, but whose spirit shall repay them with hatred inextinguishable. . . .

In the middle of all these rhetorical and sometimes tedious generalities of denunciation on the one part and devotion on the other, there come fine bursts in almost every key of poetry. Traits taken really and directly from the life of the siege, traits of actual misery or actual heroism, are put before us, sometimes with tenderness, sometimes with ferocity, in descriptive language of which the placid and reserved simplicity will burst up every now and then to let through, in language of quite another kind, that sense of ulterior mystery and immensity, that familiar presence of elemental powers, which always seems like a sea buoying up from beneath the thought of Victor Hugo. How shall one define the subtle essence of poetry in this piece of contemplative realism written "On seeing some dead Prussians floating in the Seine," in which the patriot's vindictiveness gives such a strange sting to the brooding sweetness of the dreamer ? To translate is hopeless :—

"Oui, vous êtes venus et vous voilà couchés ;
Vous voilà caressés, portés, baisés, penchés,
Sur le souple oreiller de l'eau molle et profonde ;
Vous voilà dans les draps froids et mouillés de l'onde ;
C'est bien vous, fils du Nord, nus sur le flot dormant !
Vous fermez vos yeux bleus dans ce doux bercement.

Vous aviez dit : ' —Allons chez la prostituée.
Babylone, aux baisers du monde habituée,
Est là-bas ; elle abonde en rires, en chansons ;
C'est là que nous aurons du plaisir ; o Saxons,
O Germains, vers le sud tournons notre œil oblique.
Vite ! en France ! Paris, cette ville publique,
Qui pour les étrangers se farde et s'embellit,
Nous ouvrira ses bras . . .'—Et la Seine son lit."

It is close to this that there falls the passage which goes furthest in setting forth the nature of that cosmic ideal, or sum of ideals of which we have spoken as the god of the poet's worship. It is an indignant outburst in reply to a priest calling him "atheist"; there is something like a precedent for it in Voltaire: but M. Victor Hugo need fear no impeachment of his originality, and he has never hurled all the resources of literature with greater power against an enemy than here ; he has never been more crushing than in his exposition and proof, how the real atheist is the priest with his debased deity of superstition, and the poet with his august deity of the ideal the real believer.

Close to this, again, comes the choicest passage of all that are written in another strain which runs through the poem, and gives the sense of a peculiar and touching charm as often as it appears. The poet is a patriarch ; he has his two little grandchildren, George and Jeanne. The play and prattle of these infants about the ancestral knees, as they live bravely or piningly through the hardships of the time, make themselves heard ever and anon amid the roar of cannon and the terrors of the Apocalypse. First it is an address to little Jeanne on the 30th of September, her birthday. She is a year old, and her grandfather tells her how she is like a little callow bird waking up to chirp vaguely in the warmest of nests, and so pleased to feel its feathers begin to grow ; how these are beautiful pictures in the picture-books grandpapa lets her finger and fumble—yes, but not one of them half as beautiful as Jeanne herself. How the wisest saws in books do not mean half so much as can be read in her wondering angel's eyes ; how God

is near when she is there ; what a big girl she is getting—a whole year old ; how everybody is her slave ; and as for poor old grandpapa, he only exists for her pleasure and benefit ; how, alas ! the world she smiles upon is all at strife ; how the city rings with the clang of arms while she is murmuring like a bee in summer woods ; how for him, when the humble voice lisps its song and the sweet hands are stretched out, all the tumult and terror seem to disappear, and God seems to give the beleaguered city His blessing through a little child.

Next, it is New Year's Day, and grandpapa has been out to buy the children playthings. They will tell you some day, he says to George and Jeanne, how grandpapa was a kind old fellow, who did his best in the world, and had a rough time, but was never cross to the little ones, and how he did not forget to go out and buy them toys in the middle of the famous bombardment ; and it will make you turn thoughtful as you sit under the trees. After that, things have become too terrible for the little folks to be so much thought about ; there has been starvation, despair, capitulation, disgrace. " Stroke on stroke ! bolt on bolt ! "—in the midst of his country's agony, the poet has his son struck down by sudden death ; the little girl and boy are left orphans. That is at Bordeaux, at the time of the voting of the treaty of peace. Then comes Paris again ; the Commune, and the redoubled agonies of civil war, conflagration, blind and barbarous reprisals. The poet has taken shelter at Brussels, has been driven thence by brutal clamour ; has felt once more, and hurled at his calumniators, some of the scorn of Dante ; has launched plea after plea in mitigation of the promiscuous ferocity of the victorious soldiery. In the middle of June and bloodshed, the poet has had a thought for the children—innocents with hearts like the morning, who know nothing of all that is doing, and are quite content to warm themselves in the sunlight, though it streams upon them standing amid shambles. . . .

There is one instance where an incident calls to Victor Hugo's mind some passages of his own childhood ; and this draws from him one of those irresistible jets of poetry, in which the blending

of rapture and sadness, old enchantments and present sorrow alternating to and fro within the pensive brain, is expressed with incomparable art. There was a great old building and garden, on the south side of the river, the disused convent of the Feuillantines, where Victor Hugo's mother (she would never be content without a garden) set up house when he was a child of seven with his father away at the wars, where she lived for several years, and gave shelter for a time to the proscribed General Lahorie. The site has been greatly changed. Here Victor Hugo was lingering one day during the siege, when he was almost struck by a bombshell. First of all he fires out into an amusing and characteristic burst of invective against the bombshell; calls it all the names he can think of, and asks why it, the child of nether hell, should drop forsooth out of the azure vault. Then :—" The man your tooth just grazed " had sat down to think. His eyes were looking out on a bright dream from amid the darkness; he was musing: he had played there when he was quite little: he was watching an apparition of the past. That was where the Feuillantines used to be. Your stupid thunder crashes to pieces a Paradise. How charming it was! how we used to laugh! Growing old is watching a glow that has faded. There used to be a green garden where this street goes; and the shell finishes, alack! what the pavement had begun. That is where the sparrows used to peck the mustard-flower, and the little birds picked quarrels with one another. The wood used to be full of gleams that were supernatural; such trees, such fresh air amid the quivering sprays! Then one was a little flaxen-poll; now one is grey; one was a hope, now one is a ghost! Young! one *was* young in the shadow of the old dome; now one seems as old as it.

" Le voilà,
Ce passant rêve. Ici son âme s'envola
Chantante, et c'est ici qu'à ses vagues prunelles
Apparurent des fleurs qui semblaient éternelles.
Ici la vie était de la lumière; ici
Marchait, sous le feuillage en avril épaissi,
Sa mère qu'il tenait par un pan de sa robe.

Souvenirs ! comme tout brusquement se dérobe !
L'aube ouvrant sa corolle à ses regards à lui
Dans ce ciel où flamboie en ce moment sur lui
L'épanouissement effroyable des bombes.
O l'ineffable aurore où volaient les colombes ! "

It is in the latter months of the cycle, those which follow the extinction of the Commune, that Victor Hugo's eloquence reads, I think, most like practical wisdom, and his vein of prophecy seems to take the colours of real statesmanship. He had been no partisan of the Commune or participator in it, and had earned plenty of obloquy by holding aloof. But indeed his fervent ideal humanitarianism has little in common with practical socialism. He had no faith in that movement in which so much that was devoted, so much that was generous and heroic, was mixed up with so much that was evil, lawless, and self-seeking, and the noble elements and the base went to work in equal desperation. And the blood boils within him, the spirit of his father rebels, at the demolition of the emblems of the glory of French arms. He protests against the destruction of the Vendôme column : the moment when the ropes of the Commune are hauling at that, and when the shells of Versailles are pounding at the Arch of Triumph, is of all others the moment of his deepest despondency. He denounces the burning of the palaces with all his might, and watches it with the bitterness of despair. But when the troops are in and the massacre begins, when the population is being pitched half-killed into pits of quicklime, when young and old, women and children, are being whelmed in wanton and hideous and clumsy slaughter, then he turns round : " I who would not have been with you in victory am with you in defeat " ; then he pours forth cry upon cry in behalf of justice, mercy, reason, telling the story of the victims with fearful reality, urging the folly of the butchers with admirable dignity and weight. The poet gives to sights of terror, outdoing the grimmest and most ghastly former offspring of his imagination, the same sort of tranquil and irresistible evidence which he had known how to give to those. An instinctive literary art of the

highest kind tells the story of the hunted mother and her dead child, of the batch of girls going to be shot, of the boy who keeps his tryst with death, of the writhing slaughter-heaps and the horrid burials, in words as simple as those which had told of his holding on to his mother long ago by a fold of her frock in the garden. A right and high sense of the occasion dictates the sections "To the Downtrodden," "Flux and Reflux," "At Vianden," in which it is urged how all this is preparing an evil day to come, exasperating the future, winding up in the way to make everything begin again, calling frenzy wisdom—"for suffering is the sister of hatred, and the oppressed of to-day make the oppressors of to-morrow." Again, these are the thoughts of an exile in a day when the rest of the world is gay in June: "Alas! all is not over and done because they have dug a burial-pit in the street, because a captain points to a wall where a row of poor folk is to be drawn up for his squad to practise at, because they keep shooting at random with musket or mitrailleuse as it may chance, shooting fathers or mothers, the lunatic, the robber, and the sick together, and because they burn in a hurry with lime the corpses of men still bleeding and children still warm."

Brooding over the present horror and the future inevitable retribution, the poet knows not where to fix the guilt. Least of all will he blame the misguided multitude who do evil through ignorance, and who must be very wretched or they would not take death so lightly. He will not even greatly blame the party of slaughter:—"Nobody means ill; and yet what ill is done!" It ends in his throwing the blame on the hostile forces of fate, "the venomous swarm of impalpable causes," the "gulf," the "abyss," the "void," the elemental principles of evil that are akin to the elemental scourges of nature, the mysterious plagues and visitations that attend upon man's estate.

The poet-prophet's purpose of permanent renewed self-exile did not hold, and late in 1873 he returned with his whole household from Guernsey to Paris. After trying one or two experimental homes in the

suburbs, they settled in two floors of a large house in the rue de Clichy. I had a general invitation to attend the evening receptions regularly held there, and did so several times during visits to Paris about 1874–6. At these evening gatherings the ex-actress and ex-beauty Madame Drouet, the housemate and companion of all Hugo's later life even from before his wife's death, used to do the honours. He had just turned his seventieth year, and his strength of body and mind showed no sign of abatement; while his aureole as poet and prophet home from exile was still almost undimmed, the various phases of the coming anti-romantic reaction, of which Zola and the Goncourts were the chief initiators, not having gained much effective impetus till later.

He had a gracious and not too self-conscious patriarchal courtesy and cordiality in welcoming his guests. His voice was mellow, subdued rather than loud, and even when the matter of his utterance was declamatory its delivery was serene. His sturdy figure and abundant—though not wild or untrimmed—white hair and beard, with his firm, easy movements and gestures, were full proofs of vigour. His bearing, which was that of one conscious of authority and tempering it not with condescension but with a benignant old-fashioned grace, I thought became him well. But I thought also that the demeanour of his *entourage* was too submissive in homage, and that the silence for which those nearest him gave sign when he was about to speak was inconsistent with social ease. "*Chut, le maître va parler*"—surely it is no false trick

of memory which makes me hear one of the group of satellite friends, Paul Meurice or Vacquerie or Claretie or Lockroy, thus whispering peremptorily to those about him, with a corresponding gesture of the hand, on one evening when the conversation threatened to become general. At any rate to become such it was never, in my experience, allowed.

Of the particular course of talk at any one such evening reception I have no memory. Much of it had each time to do with the actual polities of the hour; much with memories and anecdotes of his youth; some with generalized encouragement and advice to juniors; more savoured of the same habitual blend of grandiose idealist theism, patriotism, and optimism together which permeates so much of his writing, and had just seemed to reach its climax in the *Year Terrible.*

On two occasions when I presented myself it happened that Madame Drouet was ailing and the usual evening reception, I found, had been put off. But for some reason or by some means, I know not what, I was admitted, and on each occasion the poet came in from the patient's bedside, slippered and evidently anxious, and with a manner of the kindest courtesy gave me the best part of an hour to myself. Now, I each time asked myself, shall I have the good luck to get into touch with any other than the semi-public, the expected and almost traditional Hugo with whom I had so far become acquainted? Well, whether it were my fault or not, the range of subjects and the personality revealed in talking of them did not in these

tête-à-tête conversations greatly change. The notion I got was of a genius living within a range of ideas and emotions vast indeed, but nevertheless fixed and habitual and of little elasticity. He spoke affectionately of his island home at Guernsey, and said how he hoped the love of the sea and of all its powers and aspects which he had learned there might win him special sympathy from a maritime people like ourselves. Sincerely I answered that, sea-folk although we were, we had produced no poet of the sea as great or anything like as great as he. When I said something of the sympathy which a great majority of English people had with his party in French politics, and how we were disposed to count the downfall of the Third Empire an event almost worth to France the price paid for it, he expressed a gratified assent, and in his always self-possessed and serene manner uttered much the same kind of sentiments about Napoleon the Little as fill the pages of *l'Année Terrible*. The name of Swinburne being mentioned, he showed himself informed concerning and gratified by the devout homage rendered him, coupled with denunciations of the fallen Empire as ferocious as his own, by that then youngest and most dazzling poetical genius of our country. Speaking of pending work of his own, he mentioned the proposed title (never in point of fact used) for a new volume of poetry to come—*Les Colères Justes*. When I ventured to wonder whether the author of *Les Châtiments*, the lifelong fulminator against kings and priests and conquerors and oppressors, and all the cruelties and tyrannies and treacheries

of the world, could have left many things that deserved his anger still unscourged, he assured me yes, there remained plenty, and descending to a lower scale began to talk scathingly, first of the reactionary Assembly of Bordeaux, and next of some of the errors and blunders of the military defence of Paris. General Trochu (*Participe passé du verbe trop choir*, as by a ponderous enough pun he has somewhere called him) came in for a full share of contempt: and then the poet went on to dilate on a scheme of defence that should and would have been tried had he had his way. What should have been done, he declared, was to send up a vast number of captive balloons from the beleaguered city to the greatest height possible above the Prussian lines, a height beyond the reach of their artillery: platforms should have been swung in the air from between pairs or groups of such balloons; and from those platforms the best scientific chemists of the city should have poured down deadly corrosive compounds upon the enemy's lines which should have caused his hosts to burn up and shrivel and be no more.

The progress of lethal invention in the last fifty years has so far outstripped the dream of the poet-prophet as to make his imagined expedient sound primitive and futile enough; yet his manner and language in describing it combined, I remember, the apocalyptic with the familiar in a style which seemed impressive enough to his hearer at the time. What would he have said could he have foreseen how soon the device of the captive balloon was to pass out of date: how aircraft would within half a century be

steering through the sky almost as confidently as sea-ships over the waves, and more swiftly; how it would be practicable to pour down from them such a rain of ghastly corrosives, twenty-fold more concentrated than those of his dreams, as would instantaneously blight and destroy whole cities and populations; and how, if indeed an end should come to wars among mankind, it would not be from any growth of brotherhood and amity among the nations, but rather from their mutual terror of the catastrophes which science and invention should have enabled them to inflict on one another.

Apart from these matters, on both evenings one special subject was uppermost in his talk and evidently in his mind, and that was the contrast between himself and the last great world-poet and sage before him, Goethe, in the matter of patriotism. A feeling of rivalry against Goethe, a jealousy of Goethe's fame, was never far—so I have since heard from those who knew him best—from Victor Hugo's mind. For much in the historic and romantic past of Germany he had (as the section in *l'Année Terrible* above abridged abundantly shows) a generous admiration, nor had his furious and well-justified hatred of nineteenth-century Prussia and her rulers extinguished it. But for Goethe, who in his view was a German without being a German patriot, he had no toleration. Doubtless a sense of poetic rivalry helped more or less unconsciously to intensify this aversion; but his avowed quarrel with him was not for being too much, but for being too little, of a German. Love of humanity, Hugo vowed, which did not begin at home was worth

nothing. Cosmopolitan good-will was a fine thing; no one had preached it more ardently than he; but to love one's own country first and best was the essential virtue of man. That while Germany lay trampled under the heel of Napoleon Bonaparte, Goethe should have gone as a guest to the camp of the conqueror at Erfurt was for him a sin unpardonable. Dilating on it and comparing his own frame of mind on such matters, he wound up by saying, rising at the same time from his chair with his hand at his heart, "*Moi, je regarde Goethe comme Jeanne d'Arc aurait regardé Messaline.*" I have ever since carried with me the memory of this typical Hugonian pronouncement, and of the full, soft, authoritative and serenely unchallengeable tone in which he uttered it.

The master lived and wrote for some fifteen years after that date, and naturally I had from time to time work to do and friends to see in Paris; but for I know not what reason, or for none, I failed to seek his hospitality again. I wonder whether his appeased spirit may now be hovering over his beloved city, confirmed in all his transcendental faiths and foresights by the retribution, outdoing his own direst imprecations and most exulting prophecies, which in the fullness of time has overtaken her victorious enemies of the Year Terrible.

CHAPTER XVI

LÉON GAMBETTA

In old days I used to be careless about the keeping of letters, even from the most interesting correspondents, and the letter from the great French patriot and statesman which I print below most likely owes its preservation to the fact that I gave it, soon after it was written, to a friend for her collection of autographs. A recent renewed sight of it has brought back to my memory some incidents of the acquaintance, not intimate but cordial and by me much prized, which I had with the writer in the mid seventies of the last century. Those were the years, as every one knows, during which Gambetta waged and won, against the two extremes of monarchical or imperialist reaction on the one side and ultra-radical *intransigeance* on the other, his fiercely arduous, long-fluctuating, up-hill fight for the establishment of a sane and moderate republic in France.

It was in the winter of 1873–4 that I first met him, going by appointment to call on him at his modest quarters in the Rue Montaigne. I had till then never seen him either in the tribune or elsewhere. From his reputation as the most impassioned of combatant political orators and leaders—or, as his enemies had

it, the wildest of demagogues—I had expected to find in him a typical, high-strung, restlessly excitable and volatile son of the South. It was therefore with some surprise that I found, instead, a substantial rubicund person, occupying solidly the middle of a broad settee, who welcomed me with quiet geniality and proceeded at once to discuss gravely a question which was then deeply agitating France, that of the freedom of the Press. Within the previous six or eight months Gambetta had fought two tremendous battles in the Chamber on this subject, one after the suppression of the *Corsaire* newspaper, the other after a special gagging law introduced and passed by the reactionary Government in July. But in his own rooms and to his English visitor he talked of these matters without heat or rhetoric, as though for the moment his interest in them were historical and abstract. He referred much and particularly to Milton's famous *Areopagitica* (or *Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing*) as known to him in Chateaubriand's translation. Thence the talk passed to divers matters of non-political literature and of art, including the English school of painting as he had just been studying it in a recent exhibition at Brussels; and I came away realizing what I had not at all known when I went in, that here was a man who, intense as might be the strain thrown on the energies and resources of his being by the daily strife of politics, had also outside of politics a richly furnished mind and interests unusually keen and varied. For the next four years or more I seldom passed any time in

Paris without seeking opportunity to know him better. Once or twice I heard him speak in public debate at Versailles, once or twice at semi-private political gatherings of his supporters. More often, that is perhaps four or five times, I saw him in the character of host at his own breakfast-table, and about as many times as chief guest at the evening parties of that most zealous and cordial of political entertainers, Madame Edmond Adam.

At Versailles, looking down from the gallery on to the floor of the Chamber and watching him shoulder his way, genially and at the same time commandingly, among the crowd of his supporters, taking one by the arm, leaning upon the shoulder of the next, addressing one after another with a different persuasiveness or impressiveness or familiarity of gesture and accost, I am not sure but that I have been more impressed with the sense of born, instinctive leadership in him thus conveyed than even by the overwhelming power shown by him in set orations from the tribune. For the latter kind of exhibition report had pretty fully prepared one. It was great, but it was not unexpected, to observe how he would begin hoarsely and heavily; how the hostile majority would at first interrupt and challenge and seek to silence him with bitter gibes and taunts; how presently that mass of a man would take fire and seem to be all enkindled and transformed, how the great head and mane of hair would be flung back, the hand be thrust forth in sweeping, dominating gestures of denunciation or command, the voice roll out rich and clear in thundering periods of prophecy

or argument or appeal or menace, till the ranks of his enemies would seem visibly to quiver before the storm like a field of corn before the gale.

As to its actual matter, the speech of his which I remember as striking me most was at some sort of private political or Press gathering (can it have been of the staff of the *République Française*?). When toasts were in progress some one rose and volunteered a proposal to drink to the Universal Republic. Gambetta would not have it at any price. He leapt to his feet and shouted, "Qui donc entends-je parler de la république universelle? N'avons-nous pas assez de peine à fonder notre république à nous?" And he went on to insist how it was the paramount duty and need of Frenchmen to sink their own differences, to found their own republic firmly, and in so doing to avoid above all things bringing fresh dangers on themselves by interfering with the politics of their neighbours. To enforce these two joint contentions had become, with experience and responsibility, the master motive of Gambetta's political life. History provides scarcely a stronger instance of the way in which time's teachings, to quote Shakespeare,

> Divert strong minds to the course of altering things,

than the transformation of Gambetta within a couple of years from a furiously impetuous preacher of revenge against Germany into an inculcator, even more impassioned and reiterant yet, of France's need to live on terms of peace and respect with all her neighbours, her late despoiler included, until such time as she

should be herself again. The wisdom and statesmanship as well as the moral courage of this change of course in Gambetta have come, in most minds, to be beyond question now; but at the time the change was the cause of much calumnious bitterness on the part of his enemies and of painful estrangement from some of his friends. But of this more anon.

At Gambetta's breakfasts in the Rue Montaigne, and afterward in the Rue de la Chausée d'Antin, politics were of course always in the air, and from time to time one of his special lieutenants, de Freycinet or Spuller or Challemel-Lacour or Ranc, might be noticed going up to the head of the table for a confidential word aside with the chief. But the social atmosphere was almost as much literary and artistic as political. Both by taste and knowledge Gambetta could hold his own well and eloquently upon such subjects. He had in youth been both a greedy reader and a careful note-taker, and his memory was vigorous and well stored. In modern literature he loved both the great classics and the great romantics, but had little appetite for the then new and aggressive school of realists. One of the best dissections of Zola and his work I ever heard was at Gambetta's table. It was one of the guests, if I remember aright, and not the chief himself, who struck me as hitting the nail precisely on the head when he declared that Zola was under a mere delusion in imagining himself a realist; that he was truly a perverted ultra-romantic, the essential note of whose work was the *lyrisme effréné* with which he emphasized and piled up and

exaggerated the squalid and loathsome. Among the habitual guests at these breakfasts, and one of the host's most intimate and trusted friends, was the famous actor Coquelin, whom I knew independently. I have a lively recollection of a day when, after the meal was over and cigarettes lighted, Coquelin, seated straddlewise and talking over the back of his chair, held forth on the manner in which, if he had the chance, he would wish to play the part of Alceste in Molière's *Misanthrope*. "*On peut-être distingué quand on veut*," he interjected of himself, with a gesture meant to indicate as much: but the idea that such a part could fit him only showed that an artist incomparable within his range, and brilliantly intelligent to boot, could be very imperfectly conscious of his own physical limitations. He did, I believe, attempt the part afterwards in England (did he also in America ?) but never at the Comédie française.

At the salon of Madame Adam in the Boulevard Poissonière Gambetta's special gift and steadfast purpose of closing cleavages in his party, of bringing and keeping together the divers dissentient and mutually suspicious groups which it included, were seconded to admiration by the sagacious and single-minded goodwill of the host, and still more by the social charm and tact of his wife, a woman as cultivated as she was handsome and gracious. There too the atmosphere, though mainly political, was literary and artistic as well. My own chief original passport to the lady's notice and hospitality had been my interest in Greek art and literature. I was grateful to her

for the opportunities her invitations gave me of watching her at her woman's work of putting one after the other into good-humour, now some fossilized doctrinaire of the Left Centre, now some fiery young ultra-radical from the south, and now some moody waverer between several camps, and so predisposing all manner of discordant male tempers to yield to the persuasions and arguments by which the chief should induce them to sink differences and work together. But she had her own unsubduable and passionately impatient emotions of patriotism, and could not prevent "*La Revanche*" from being the continual cry not only of her heart but of her tongue. After a while Gambetta's policy of never letting the word be uttered, however deeply the mind might cherish the purpose, wore out and alienated this headstrong feminine spirit. His reasoned conviction was that France was bound to live on terms of respect and international courtesy, if not amity, with Germany until time should bring her strength and opportunity to stand up on equal terms and demand restitution of the lost provinces or compensation for them. She crudely and blindly denounced this policy as "Bismarckism," and not only their political co-operation but their friendship, despite loyal efforts on both parts to preserve it, came to an end. This happened within a year or two after her husband's death in 1877; and by 1879 she was devoting her whole energies to the foundation and conduct of a great literary enterprise of her own, the *Nouvelle Revue*.

Here is a document, hitherto unpublished, which may serve to illustrate that attitude of Gambetta

towards Germany and the *Revanche* which was one of the chief causes of estrangement between this friend and himself. To account for its existence I must explain that when I was in Greece in 1876 the German minister there was Herr von Radowitz (the "*éminent interlocuteur*" of the letter), a brilliant, still young diplomatist who had been until lately Bismarck's secretary and stood very high in the great Chancellor's favour. He and I saw much of each other at Athens, and were companions on several excursions and for the time being great friends. He having to depart for Berlin and I for London about the same time, we had agreed to come away together by one of the Austrian Lloyd mail-boats proceeding round Cape Malea to Trieste. An invitation to dinner for both of us at the English Legation coming for the night on which we should have started, we decided to change our plans, stay for the dinner, which we knew was bound to be pleasant, and travel from Athens by way of Corinth and Patras, a short cut which would enable us to reach Corfu before the arrival of the Austrian mail-boat and be picked up there by her. Carrying out this plan, we came to Corfu accordingly, and after a few hours' rest went down to the harbour for the mail-steamer at the hour when she was due. The hour passed and she did not appear; and then another hour and another and another, until late in the afternoon there came the news that she had been in collision with an English cargo ship at three o'clock in the morning and gone down like a stone with absolutely every soul on board. Thus we two had had as narrow

an escape for our lives as was possible to have without the least touch or thrill of adventure in it. Inasmuch as the change of plan which had brought it about was of my proposal, Herr von Radowitz, and afterwards his family, chose to look upon me as having saved his life, and made much of me accordingly when I went to carry out some studies at Berlin the next year. Talking incidentally of Gambetta and of his position and aims in France, von Radowitz said how very highly his moderation and good sense were coming to be appreciated in Germany. I have never been a meddler in politics; but this time, fancying from my friend's manner that his words were meant to be repeated, I wrote to Gambetta and quoted them. It was one of the busiest and most trying moments of Gambetta's whole career, but he took the trouble to answer me with his own hand, saying how much he valued such an expression of opinion, how it confirmed his hopes that French prudence and French sincerity were justly recognized across the Rhine; but how at the same time it needed all his confidence in the good sense of his fellow-countrymen to keep him from trembling for the consequences of the reactionary *coup* of May 16: how nevertheless he was confident that the coming elections would result in a victory for the party of peace and moderation both in home and foreign affairs.*

* "Mon cher Monsieur Colvin,—

Je vous suis extrêmement reconnaissant de la lettre si intéressante que vous avez bien voulu m'écrire. J'avais depuis déjà longtemps le pressentiment très vif qu'au delà des Vosges on savait

In writing to Gambetta as I did I had not at all realized the extent to which he was making it his own duty and business to inform himself at first hand of the state of political and military affairs in Germany. In his reply he naturally does not give me the least hint of the fact, which has since come out, that he had actually himself, barely a month before the date of my letter, spent a fortnight incognito in the enemy's country observing and studying these matters for himself.† His reference in the second paragraph to

voir et juger sainement et notre conduite et notre sincérité. Mais rien ne pouvait plus opportunément me confirmer dans mes espérances et mes vues que les déclarations si nettes et si fermes de votre éminent interlocuteur.

" Toutefois je dois dire, pour ne rien laisser dans l'ombre, qu'il me faut toute la confiance légitime que m'inspire le bon sens de mon pays, pour ne pas trembler devant les conséquences possibles de la monstrueuse aventure du 16 Mai. Heureusement nous vaincrons et alors il sera donné aux hommes de bonne volonté, animés de sages idées libérales et progressives, de donner à tous ceux qui au delà de nos frontières observent l'évolution de la France, des preuves et des gages de leur politique de paix et de modération au dedans et au dehors, Veuillez croire à mes sentiments dévoués,

" Léon Gambetta,

" 35, Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin,

" Paris, 11 October, 1877."

† The circumstances of this tour are fully related by Gambetta in a letter to Madame Adam dated September 20 and published in the sixth volume of her *Souvenirs* (*Nos Amitiés Politiques avant l'abandon de la Revanche*, Paris, 1908, pp. 388–393). In the course of the next year, 1878, pourparlers for a formal and public meeting of Gambetta and Bismarck were set on foot, but afterwards broken off by Gambetta lest such a meeting should be misinterpreted.

the pending crisis in France relates of course to the consequences of Marshal MacMahon's action, on the 16th of the previous May, in arbitrarily dismissing the ministry of Jules Simon and forming, in the teeth of Republican majorities both in Chamber and Senate, a ministry of violent reaction under de Broglie and Fourtou. Differences among the various reactionary parties, and perhaps some bed-rock strain of soldierly honesty in the Marshal himself, had saved France from the military *coup d'état* and attempt at monarchical restoration which had been generally expected to follow. The Chamber had been legally dissolved and elections for a new Chamber held. The declaration of the result, so decisive for the whole future history of France, was due on October 14, only three days after the date of Gambetta's letter to me printed above. A large although diminished Republican majority was in fact returned, confirming Gambetta's prophetic threat that the Marshal would have either to submit or resign (*se soumettre ou se démettre*). He first submitted to the extent of appointing a ministry from the Left Centre and Left, and about a year later resigned. By this time Gambetta had become in all men's eyes incontestably the chief personage in France. But wisely or unwisely, he did not think the time ripe for him to assume the office of Chief of the State. First as president of the budget commission, then for nearly two years as President of the Chamber, then for a short while as Prime Minister, then as president of the army commission, he continued to be involved in incessant struggles on behalf of the

domestic and foreign policies he thought wise. Meanwhile every kind of rancorous jealousy and ingratitude was unchained in endeavours by his enemies and false friends to blacken him in the sight of France as a would-be dictator; and the worst of the obloquy thus aroused was only beginning to pass away when death overtook him (December 31, 1882).

During those last four years I was much less in France than previously, and saw little of him. Indeed I cannot remember that I ever spoke with him after he had become President of the Chamber; or shared his hospitality under its new, more sumptuous and ceremonious conditions at the Palais Bourbon. Certainly I never saw nor suspected—but in this I was practically at one with all except the very nearest of his intimates—the existence of the tie which had been through all those strenuous years the governing fact and secret inspiration of his life. Since one of his friends * has made public the story of his relations with Mademoiselle Léonie Leon, and the determined self-abnegation which kept that devoted woman from consenting, until almost the very end, openly to share the life which all the while she was secretly guiding and inspiring, the new halo of a great romantic passion has been added to Gambetta's ever-growing fame as a statesman.

* Francis Laur, *Le Cœur de Gambetta*, Paris, 1907.

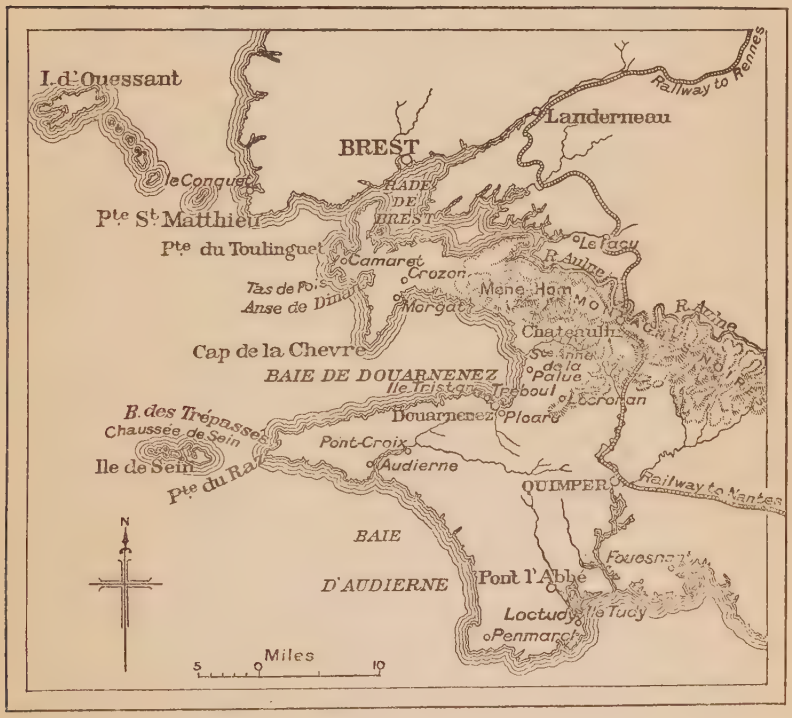
CHAPTER XVII

AT THE LAND'S END OF FRANCE
[1876]

[It was in Gambetta's company and in talking to one of his friends—the poet Hérédia if I remember aright—that I expressed a special interest in a certain kind of coast scenery, not the relatively uniform and level kind pleasantly familiar to my boyhood, but that on the contrary which presents the sharpest alternation and most trenchant variety of character. Cape constantly interchanging with bay, creek contiguous to spit and every headland sheltering its adjacent haven, this was the kind of coast scenery we found that we cared for in common: but only when its features are not too vast to be taken in and their contrasts explored by a traveller of moderate powers: not on that grander scale where every inlet amounts to a bight and every projection to a promontory.

My interlocutor agreed with me to the full, and we went on to cap and confirm each other in insisting how no other kind of scenery is so various as this, none so full of contrast, of discovery, of allurement. We reminded each other how such a coast at once invites you, at every cove and inlet, to quiet sojourn, and beckons you, past every headland, to mysterious beyonds. The better you know it, the more entertain-

ment you find in its surprises, the more poetry in its secrets. Your eye delights to linger along the profile of the land where it pushes out farthest on this hand or on that, and seems as though it would never dip



into the sea-line. One day you start to follow out the exploration on foot, and then that even-seeming distance breaks up and complicates itself before you, with jutting of unsuspected nesses and disclosure of hidden havens, into a succession of many headlands instead of one. Another day you seek, and find if

you are fortunate, some inland height from whence you can look down, as it were upon the back of your hand, upon the coast line and learn all its branchings. Do you want peace ?—in the recesses of the bays you shall find halcyon shelter. Do you want storm ?—there is surf about the reefs and precipices of the headlands. In your walks you never know what you will come to next. You may think you have turned your back upon the sea, but it pushes round farther than you know ; as you traverse a moorland you may catch the gleam of it unexpectedly in front of you, or as you go down through a wood the blue of it may strike suddenly up through openings between the boughs. Or at a moment when you are wholly taken up with inland sights and fancies, with orchards, threshing-floors, or hedgerow-flowers, you may hold your breath as you become aware all at once that the sound of the trees has taken a fuller note, and changed into the sound of waves close at hand. At night, if you have climbed to some windmill or high place to take the freshness and the moonlight, a streak of silver far off over the darkness of the country may tell you of inland waters of which you had not guessed.

I had spoken of a particular stretch of the west coast of Scotland, from Gairloch to Loch Inver, as the region within my knowledge where effects like these are to be found touched with the northern gloom and grandeur, yet on too great or ungraspable a scale ; and on the other hand of the Esterel in the South of France, from about Hyères to Antibes, as the coast where the daintiest of headlands adventure the most

capriciously into the mast-enchanted sea. My friend suggested that I should be well rewarded if I tried the coast of the French Cornwall—Cornouailles, Cornu Galliae, Horn of Gaul, the most remote and least-frequented part of the department of Finistêre in Brittany. In the company of some friends I took his advice, and the following are my notes of the result. I let them stand almost as they were written and printed at the time (that is in 1876), understanding that in the main the character of the scenes described and of their inhabitants has undergone little change. The railway has been carried on from Quimper to Douarnenez, and even as far as to Audierne, making access easier for summer tourists, and considerably increasing both their numbers and the accommodation provided for them ; but not, I am told, so greatly as to vulgarize the ground or much modernize the ways of the people. Nature and legend, on their part, are in such scenes perdurable and constant, the one almost as much as the other.]

Although Brittany has of late years become holiday ground, and receives its contingent of tourists as regularly as Switzerland or the Rhine, still curiosity or convenience so guides the main body of these that, while they crowd both the northern and southern seaboards of the country, few by comparison find their way to its western extremity, to the land's end, or land's ends, for there are several of them, with which the Armorican peninsula confronts the Atlantic. There is one point only, in all that diversified region to the South of Brest, whither people have learnt to go

in any numbers, and that is the Pointe du Raz, a scene of which the guide-books have made much, so that it has become something like a resort for tourists, at least of the more enterprising class.

The nearest railway is at Quimper, the venerable capital of the district and seat of its bishopric, a pleasant river-side city of gables and fables, familiar to every one who has been in Lower Brittany at all. To see the Pointe du Raz, you must travel some thirty miles due west of Quimper, over a healthy region with the sea not far off on either hand, and take up your quarters at the little fishing town of Audierne. Like many towns on these coasts, Audierne was a great place once, but towards the end of the sixteenth century disasters came upon it, and it has gone on in a dwindled impoverished way, from which it is only beginning to revive in consequence of the modern expansion of the sardine trade. The waters in which its boats ply are very perilous, but among the most abounding in the world, and yield, besides the staple of sardines, immense numbers of lobsters, crayfish, congers, bass, mullet, and mackerel. The town lies near the mouth of a river, and consists of a number of large stone houses scattered along a wharf under a hill; a mile of well-built jetty or sea-wall prolongs the wharf out to the river's mouth, and carries at its extremity a lighthouse to guide the fishermen into port. It is solemn to walk upon this sea-wall at night, and hear the boom of the iron-bound outer coasts, and watch the lanterns of a belated boat or two, and presently their dim shapes and sails, as they make

their way in past the reefs and come slipping before a breeze or groaning under oars up the channel through the dark. As for quarters, you are not too ill off at Audierne. The ways of inns in this part of Brittany are always primitive and careless enough, and their prices not so admirably low as in some places of the Léonnais, farther north. But beds are clean; and here at any rate you may be at ease about your food, for your host himself dines at table in the old fashion, and carves for his guests and talks to them. He is a personage in these parts, *le père* Batifoulier, and with his comical name and prodigious girth furnishes a kindly jest to all the country-side. He is not a native, but came from Auvergne five-and-twenty years ago, and must have shrewd stuff in him to have made his way, as strangers seldom can, among Bretons in Brittany. His corporation is so vast that a curve has had to be scooped out of the head of the table to make room for it, and his arms can only just reach out past it as he sits, so that he may hold the *gigot* upright in the dish with his left hand while he carves it with his right. His bulk was not always as cumbersome as it is now, and he has three medals for lives he has saved in the harbour. It does you good to hear his deep slow voice among the chatter of the table, and to see the look of slow humour and kindness which plays now and again over his immense swarthy countenance. His wife, if you will let her, will pack you a great basket with bread and wine, chicken and lobster, when you start to spend the day at the Pointe du Raz.

It is a six miles drive or walk from Audierne to the lighthouse which is at the summit of that famous promontory. After you get clear of the frequent hamlets, which make this desolate region seem more desolate with the sense of a population living where there are no apparent means of life, and after you pass from among the innumerable stone walls with which they fence off fields where nothing seems to grow, you come out on a plateau with the Atlantic close beneath you on either hand. At first you are disappointed, for this is like any other heathery and stony plateau above the sea; the height, something under two hundred and fifty feet, is not so formidable, nor is there anything so very striking in the forms of some cliffs that you discern across a narrow bay on your right. It is only when you walk on past the lighthouse and dip towards the extremity of the point that the character of the place comes out. The plateau narrows to a ridge, and you walk no longer among stones and heather, but among jumbled masses of lichen-stained granite, in the crevices of which only a few sea-pinks and tufts of samphire find soil enough to grow. Beneath your right hand are sheer granite cliffs that become more shattered and fantastic as you advance; the path winds round the heads of chasms; you peer down sudden clefts into the darkness of which the sea drives foaming. It echoes and booms; rock and sea tear at one another; in one place the sea has pierced a passage, a mere thread wide, through the thickness of the point. But the point juts on and on, the riven granite taking wilder

and wilder forms, the ridge with its chaos of heaped rocks narrowing and narrowing, until at last you squeeze your way between two boulders, and find yourself at the end of all things. You are face to face with an immeasurable vastness. Three-quarters of the horizon is ocean. You have to turn about and look south-east to descry in that quarter the far-off line of bay that ends in the long spit of Penmarc'h. To the north, if the day is clear, you can trace out an endless succession of headlands, beginning with the near Pointe de Van, going on with the many-branched peninsula on the hither side of Brest, then passing beyond the mouth of Brest harbour along a faint interminable line that dips once, and then appears again, fainter and further yet, where are the scarce distinguishable islands of the archipelago of Ushant.

But more than the immensity of the sea, more than the mysteriousness of those far-ranging coasts, you will be struck by what lies immediately under and before you. Here at your feet the precipice falls away and the ocean-currents sweep; the land ends here; but the battle is not over yet. From amid the waves the granite rears itself again and again. One, two, three, great fortresses of black and battered rock appear in line out to sea at intervals of half a mile or more, and between them lesser crests and ridges top the waves by a few feet only. Carry your eye along this line, and you come to a long flat island, with a lighthouse, lying upon the sea about five miles off, and over that, reefs and reefs again to the farthest horizon. For this chain of rocks, some visible and

some sunken, the remains of a mighty spur of mainland, now engulfed, stretches out for near six leagues west.

The low island with the lighthouse is called the Île des Seins, and is inhabited by a few hundred fishermen. It must be the most desolate home in the world. It is often unapproachable from the mainland for weeks together. The strip of barren soil rises little more than ten feet above the sea, and not a tree grows on it. The island has a small harbour with a jetty, in which the fishing-boats anchor, and whither English and other traders come to carry away the produce of the fisheries. By their take of lobster and crayfish the islanders make a good deal in the season, but drink all their money away, and are half starved for the rest of the year. Their only other resource is the burning of sea-weed to make soda, and what waifs and strays they gather from shipwrecks. For nothing can persuade the people of these coasts to keep their hands off flotsam and jetsam. They are not wreckers, this thriftless, sodden, banished race of the Île des Seins; nay, they are daring seamen, and often heroic in saving and kind in tending the castaway; but they do not think of property as they do of life, and all merchandize that comes upon the coast they take for theirs. It is a coast of a terrible name for shipwrecks. Much has been done and is doing with lighthouses, but nothing can prevent the deadly Chaussée des Seins, as they call the chain of reefs beyond the island, and the perilous Bec du Raz, which is the name of the channel between the island and the point, from devouring their yearly

tale of lives. On either side of the point the waters are full of fish, so that smacks pass to and fro continually in the Bec du Raz; as do greater craft often, to avoid the long circuit outside the Chaussée.

The Breton fisher has a prayer for the passage: "Pray God help me through the Raz; my boat is so little and the sea so great!" And he has proverbs which say, "No man passes the Raz without mischance or the fear of it"; and again, "Whoso steers not wisely in the Raz is a dead man." The currents past the point and among the reefs are such that it scarcely needs wild weather to bid the seaman beware. But it is in wild weather that the place is most itself and should be seen. Then the whole weight of the Atlantic comes crashing against the granite juts and buttresses; then the caves re-bellow, and the seas storm the cliffs, and dense foam drives over the plateau, and a man cannot hear himself nor stand. This I have never seen, but only how the Raz looked on a summer's day when the air was still, with a sense of distant thunder, and the quick lizards came peeping and slipping as lightly as leaves over the hot rocks about me. The Atlantic was burning blue, and very calm—but in that calm what a perfidy: the waves could not keep from booming; the tide swung against the point and between the chain of rocks with the force of a cataract, but smoothly until it met the current, when it broke into a sudden race with the crossing of a myriad shocks and the leaping of innumerable crests. Against the adverse smoothness a fishing-crew laboured with wind and oar in vain; along the thickest of the

race a shoal of porpoises passed with leap and fling; cormorants with their necks out flew their straight low flights; the sea-gulls wheeled and called. Presently the swing of the tide grew slacker; there was a half hour when the sea ebbed confusedly all ways instead of one, and then the race began again, only reversed. Meanwhile something strange had happened to that forlorn island in the offing. It had disappeared, and in its place there brooded over the sea a dense white shroud, which presently came spreading thinly, and with an ashen odour, to the land. It was only the smoke of the burning kelp, which had been thicker than usual that afternoon, and had hung in the still air; but the sight had a thrill in it, and made one think of all the mysterious things that have been said and believed about the place.

For the Île des Seins is a ghostly island, an island of Souls, as in truth that afternoon it looked no less. The awfulness of the coast, the peril of the seas, the weirdness of that minute inhabited desert in the midst of the seas, have possessed the imagination of the people. Between the Pointe du Raz and the Pointe de Van there is a narrow bay ending in a straight shore of sand; and behind the sand a great mere full of bulrushes in a gloomy valley. The bay is called *La Baie des Trépassés*, Dead Men's Bay, partly no doubt from the natural terror of the place, partly because to these sands is washed the drowned body of many a seaman, partly because of tales which tell how in this place, between the sea-waves and the mere, the spirits of the unburied dead assemble in the night-time,

and claim with moanings a passage to their home. The belief, as it is said to exist among the people to this hour, is very like what we find recorded by Procopius thirteen hundred years ago. Hear Procopius, in Holcroft's spirited English:—"Along the ocean shore over against Brittia"—by Brittia Procopius makes it clear that he means the island of Britain, and by the parts over against it the peninsula we call Brittany—"along the ocean shore over against Brittia are many villages inhabited by fishermen, husbandmen, and boatmen, who traffique in the island. . . . They have the employment of conducting Soules departed imposed on them by turns; when any man's time comes, they goe home to bed towards night, expecting their fellowe conductor, and at midnighte they finde the door opened, and hear a softly Voice calling them to the business; instantly they rise, and go down to the sea-side, finding themselves constrained to goe on, but they perceive not by whom; Boats they find ready, with no men in them, and aboard they goe and sit to their Oares. They perceive the Boats loaded with passengers even to the deck, and the place of their Oares not an inch from the water; they see nothing, but after an hour's rowing come a land in Brittia, whereas in their own Boats they have much ado to pass over in a Day and a Night, having no Sailes but rowing only. And they instantly land their Fare, and are gone away with their Boats suddenly grown light, and swimming with the current, and having all save the Keele above water: They see no Men leaving the Boates, but they heare a Voice

relating to some, who it seemes stayes there for them, the names of the Passengers, with their Titles, and additions of what Fathers they were ; and (if women) what husbands." Procopius's story thus is that the souls are ferried from Brittany to Britain, but others say, to that mysterious island nearer home. Again Claudian, in his invective against Rufinus, makes Tisiphone emerge from the mouth of hell at a place in Gaul : " there is a place where Gaul spreads forth her farthest shore—beyond it stretch the waters of the Ocean—where Ulysses is said to have drawn to him the silent host by his libation of blood : there is heard the wailing clamour of shades that flit with a thin cry." When Claudian writes thus of the mouth of hell, it seems almost as if he too had heard of such traditions as linger still about the Île des Seins and Dead Men's Bay. Much learning has been spent, and some of it patently mis-spent, in trying to identify these places with other allusions of ancient writers. Suffice it that here, even in the stillest summer, we find a spell that works upon us strangely—how much more then upon the storm-beaten imaginations of those who live and die, with awe handed down from generation to generation, amid the sights and sounds of the place.

A still stronger experience of gloom and desolateness is in store for one at another point of the coast. If the reader will look at the little map farther back, he will see that the Bay of Audierne is terminated at the south-east by a point called Penmarc'h. Instead of the plateaux and precipices of the Pointe du Raz,

the land here juts out low and very flat. But it is treacherous all the more. The whole coast is fringed with a deep border of black rocks, not lofty or threatening, but lying piled in long shelves and tables between sand and sea—here cleft with gullies up which the waves hurry with stealth, there running out in long spits and bars over which they foam savagely, and again studding the blue for miles with detached points and fragments. One would say it was a coast impossible for seafaring. And yet on these deserted sands stood a city that was once among the richest in the Duchy. Penmarc'h in old days could equip her three thousand men-at-arms, and shelter behind her jetties her fleet of eight hundred craft. She had her Drapers' Street and her Jewellers' Street, her almost independent communal government, her burghers who used, they say, to toss their wine only from golden cups; her goodly spires and towers; her army of stoled ecclesiastics. Upon the plain where the rich city stood are now a lighthouse, three or four squalid fisher-hamlets of a dozen houses each, the remains of half a dozen churches, a few fragments of tower and crenelation, the gables of a few fallen houses, and many tell-tale mounds and uneven lines upon the sand. A score or so of fishing-boats hang their nets to dry in a scanty anchorage between two spits of rock. Never has been such a downfall so close within man's memory. The first blow to the prosperity of Penmarc'h was struck by the English, who descended here in 1404 under Admiral Wilford, and to whom the place, being unfortified because of its extent and

the nature of the ground, yielded easy plunder. Against similar chances the citizens tried fortifying private houses and churches; nevertheless they were continually harassed by pirates. The great source of their wealth, besides a large trade with Spain, was a bank of codfish off their coast, the richest then known. Presently changes in the bars and currents took this resource away, and later the cod fisheries of Newfoundland superseded theirs. The changes of bar and current by degrees also made their anchorage more dangerous. And so the city was on the decline already, when the great blow came to it thus, at the end of the sixteenth century. The wars of the League had brought upon Brittany a more cruel anarchy than upon any other part of France. Marauding partisans fortified themselves wherever they chose, and harried the country. The most ferocious of these, the young Guy Eder of Fontenelle, came one day, from his island stronghold in a bay to the North, insinuated himself into the good graces of the Penmarc'h burghers and their wives, and then sprang upon them with his cut-throats, burned, sacked, slew, and finally trailed off to his island a booty that loaded three hundred boats. That day made an end to Penmarc'h. The best part of its surviving inhabitants scattered themselves among other better defended towns. The descendants of the remainder are the scanty fisher population whom you find to-day.

This, too, is a place where people go to see as a sight the warfare of the elements. The thunder of these reefs, the rush of the waves upon these ledges,

the storm of sand and spray along the plain, the mingling of earth, heaven, and ocean, are in their way not less impressive than the spectacle of the Raz. One day five years ago * the sea dealt in this place a felon stroke. Two ladies and three children had come to watch a storm, and were standing in front of a cabin which a painter had built for himself just out of reach of the waves. It was no very great gale, but the painter called out to them to mind or the spray would wet them. The words were scarcely out of his mouth when from a gully in the rocks beside them a sea leapt up, and swept them in a moment to their deaths. A cross clamped into the rock marks the place. The inhabitants declare that no wave was ever known to break so far before. The husband of one of the ladies was serving in Paris at the time; he wrote to her as the besieged did write to their friends, by balloon, for two months afterwards, and only learnt his loss when upon the capitulation he made haste to these coasts to find her. What I witnessed at Penmarc'h was no scene of storm or peril, only the close of such another summer's day as at the Raz. The sun sank red and glorious upon a pearly sea, and facing it a broad pale silver moon rose above the misty land. From sun to moon there was drawn overhead a great arch of clouds narrowing towards either horizon—clouds—films—how shall one call those luminous fleeces spanning the firmament, that magic of amber flame and thin-drawn gold against the blue? How tell of the gradations of the sky from zenith to

* *I.e.* in 1871.

horizon, the melting of sapphire into chrysoprase and ruby and topaz ? In the shoreward water, barred with rocks and broken into pools, the subtlety of that transition was lost, and the reflections cast up were like a dark-set mosaic of different coloured lights, pearly and rose and blue. With all this pageantry in sky and sea, what a sense of desolation, of ruinousness and death. Thin fumes of burning kelp hung over the plain, the hot air felt as if it had contagion in it. As the twilight fell, and one stumbled along the uneven bents between the great lighthouse and a church built almost on the sands, where fishermen give thanks for safety, the ghostliness of the place grew more and more. Flights of petrels flitted swift and shrill among the rocks ; anon a hoarser curlew whooped. On the land grew beds of the dry sea-poppy, with its twisting pods and frail yellow blossoms ; and presently came a bed of another flower and set the last seal of deathliness upon the place. On the thinnest of the sand the narcotic thorn-apple (*Datura stramonium*) put forth its long bells, pure white and fantastically five-folded, from among its thick growth of leaves and spiky seed vessels and rank stems—an ominous bloom, having, as Gerrard puts it, " a strong ponticke savour, that offendeth the head when it is smelled unto," and growing among waste places and the haunts of human decay. Gathering a handful of these beautiful ghostly flowers in the moonlight, it felt time to hasten away under one knew not what gathering fever and oppression of the spirits.

But the reader has had enough of desolation, whether

masked or manifest, enough of iron cliffs, and places—

> Where beyond the extreme sea-wall, and between the remote sea-gates,
> Waste water washes, and tall ships founder, and deep death waits

There is monotony in this, and I began by vaunting the variety of my favourite scenery. Well, to appreciate that, there is no need to go farther than the bay enclosed between two of our promontories, the Pointe du Raz and the Cap de la Chèvre. On its shores there is abundant choice. To explore them properly, you must make your headquarters at Douarnenez, the town which stands at its innermost south-eastern recess (the bay is about fifteen miles by ten) and from which it takes its name. It was an island close to Douarnenez, the Île Tristan, that the brigand Fontenelle chose for his fortress, and whither he trailed his three hundred boatloads of plunder from Penmarc'h. For five years he was master of the town and island. From those five years, which saw the ruin of so many neighbouring places, the prosperity of Douarnenez seems to have begun. It has gradually taken the lead of other fishing-places on the coast. The bay of Audierne yields the heaviest takes, but can only be fished in fine weather; while except in great westerly gales, the bay of Douarnenez is one vast roadstead, with a perfect anchorage, and in all weathers there is refuge in the double harbour of the port itself. The great extension of the sardine trade took place soon after 1860. Large fortunes were made; the fisher population was doubled and trebled by the influx of

country folk anxious to share in the profits and high wages of the fishery. (A similar circumstance is recorded of Penmarc'h in the fourteenth century.)

A great part of the town is new, and the houses and factories are solidly built of stone, without a thought of the picturesque ; their rows of plain square piercings make them look like child's houses. One long street streams down a hill from the old parish church of Ploaré, and from the foot of this the town parts into three, one part running straight down upon rocks that project into the bay, a smaller part sloping to some wharves and sardine factories beside an estuary on the left, the largest part to some more wharves and many more sardine factories on the right, beside a small artificial harbour built in the innermost nook of the bay. "It is difficult," wrote a commissioner appointed near the end of the eighteenth century to report on the moral, physical, and statistical aspects of that then *terra incognita*, the department of Finistère —"it is difficult to see a town more ill kept than Douarnenez, despite the prosperity and rich trade of its inhabitants. The want of police, the want of order, allows rotten sardines and decomposing brine to be flung into the street ; it is impossible, even in winter, to smell fouler smells than those that greet one on approaching the town ; they are insupportable, in summer, to any one not used to them from infancy." Cambry's words are hardly too strong for the Douarnenez of to-day. The population, under fifteen hundred in his time, is nearly nine thousand now. The sources of the place's prosperity show themselves in a hundred

ways, innocent and offensive. All the grown men and boys are drawn seaward, and man the fleet of four hundred boats which is mustered between this port and the dependency of Tréboul. Almost all the young girls are employed in the factories, on the various processes of preparing, cleaning, preserving, and packing the fish. The patient mothers with their clean anxious faces, their heavy cloth petticoats and great white caps of various fashion—these are left alone to do the household work and mind the troups of brawling children. One feels kindly to these women, for their lot is hard, with their menkind engaged on a precarious trade, and given to drink in good times and despondency in bad; and kindly to these children too, when they do not brawl and scream too loud, for they have merry open faces, and the tiny girls are sweet to look at with their rings of dark or yellow hair escaping from under the layers of close caps that are put on them. Girls and boys alike, the monkeys, will stretch out their hands to you with a peremptory "Donnez-moi un sou;" not that they much expect one, and will send you on your way with a cheery guttural "Bon-jour" whether they get it or no, and then fall chattering and laughing among each other in their own tongue, which, being beyond your learning, somehow gives you a sense of superior attainment in the creatures. But although some few of one's impressions of the people may thus be touching or bright enough, in the main one has to confess that they seem a demoralized race. Husbandmen who have turned fishers, Bretons who have ceased to be primitive

without becoming civilized, traders newly enriched, they have no stedfast character or traditions, and care chiefly to make money out of the stranger while they can. They are slovens and horribly unclean. Not only do strips and shavings of waste tin, punched for making the sardine-box of our breakfast-tables, glitter in great heaps about the banks—there would be small harm in that—but waste brine from the salting, waste oil from the pickling, spoiled bait from the fishing, and all the odious refuse of the factories runs decaying in the gutters, and makes some parts of the town intolerable ; nor are these the worst defilements.

But all these drawbacks will be nothing to the traveller or the artist who has once stayed long enough to become aware of the beauty of the neighbourhood, which is a continual feast. From the hill-ranges to the bay, the country slopes down with alternations of character the most singular. Barren moorlands, often partitioned with great banks and hedges, yet growing nothing within these divisions but gorse, fern, and heather, are terminated above the sea by black precipitous cliffs. Between these tongues of moorland, and dividing them, come valleys the greenest that you ever saw, with meadows of lush grass and galingale, and osier-beds and fields of grain and hemp, and burdened orchards, and homesteads hidden among great clumps of elms ; and at the sea such valleys are terminated by level lengths of sand, in which you will find not the tenderest shell once broken. And so the whole shore of the bay is a succession of wild cliffs alternating with perfect sands, the length of each

extending generally for a mile or two at a stretch. In some places the richest inland verdure comes down to the very sea itself, in a way that seems fabulous. One such place is close north-eastward of the town. Foot-paths lead you down, among great moist banks grown with mossy beeches, elms, and sycamores, some of them of noble size, upon a tiny emerald meadow which is set, within great tangled hedges, upon the very rock itself. Farther on, the richest jungle of brambles, sloes, hazels, and honeysuckles hangs upon the face of the cliff. You may sit with the shadow of this verdure about your head and your feet dipping into deep transparent sea, and watch the great green woodpecker go from stem to stem of the trees, and the kingfisher flash from point to point of rock. It is not easy to be tired of this sea, with its deep pure colour and splendour beneath a summer sky, with its far-spread gildings and marblings when the sun plays through clouds, with the ominous sudden darkness that hangs over it when storms gather along the Black Mountain, with the busy fisher fleets putting in or out that people it in almost all weathers. But if any day you do feel tired of the sea, it is easy to turn landward and exchange it for sights of scarcely less charm and variety.

This is not a good country to walk through, as a tourist walks, because of the high banks and hedges that shut out your view from the roads ; but to walk in, as one walks who is staying in a country, it is perfect. Do not keep to the high-roads, but find your way at large. The Breton peasant does not himself love high roads, but has a track of his own wherever he

wants to go. Innumerable single tracks or lanes of this kind, sometimes up between the brooms and brambles on the top of a great bank, sometimes deep down in a hollow between two banks, sometimes over the open moor, lead secretly winding and doubling from hamlet to hamlet, from farmstead to farmstead, from one wayside sanctuary to another, from windmill to cottage, from field to wood, nay, oftenest of all from nowhere to nowhere. Not one of them but will lead you to pleasant sights, and out of one character of soil—and with soil, of climate—to another. The still, marshy hollows have one atmosphere, the tinkling brooksides beneath the trees another, the bleak *landes*, and clumps of lonely pines upon the ridges, a third.

There is only one unity in it all, and that is in its colour. Hardly anywhere have I seen the colours of landscape so rich—so solemn and at the same time so vivid. The greens even of Ireland as I remember them are pale beside the intensity of these in moist places. The heather is of a larger kind and a much brighter purple than with us, and in dying takes a rich lingering russet that gives a singular beauty to the moorlands. The mosses and lichens are of a redder gold or a softer silver than elsewhere. The honeysuckle has larger flowers and more brilliant berries. The blackberries are as large and rich as mulberries with us. There are places where ferns and loosestrife become colossal,

> and dank moisture feeds
> The pipy hemlock to strange overgrowth.

The fields of buckwheat bloom with a creamier white, and ripen with stalks of a richer and more transparent

amber and crimson than in other places. The sheep are all black, or rather of a fine velvet brown. To this rich colouring of nature the costume of the people answers admirably. It is a picture to come, as one constantly does, upon a group of women kneeling at their washing round an open tank beneath the trees; their dresses are of various deep sound blues that only improve by wear and washing, relieved by the white of their caps and perhaps a touch of chocolate in their aprons and of rose or yellow in their kerchiefs. So, too, of the men; the peasants of these parishes wear on holidays some three or four sleeveless embroidered jackets, comically short, over their sleeved waistcoats; and for jackets and waistcoat alike they must have fine cloth from Montauban, of different shades of blue, but of no false dye or new-fangled make, or they will none of it.

But I have spoken only of the natural sights of this neighbourhood, and they are only half its charm. It abounds also in interesting works of man's hands. This is not a country where you find such obvious and impressive monuments of ancient worship as the famous single stone of Dol, or the league-long ranges of Carnac; but lesser stone monuments of the same order are plentiful on the desolate levels of the *landes*, here as in all the rest of Brittany, and are often not very easy to distinguish from the blocks which nature herself has plied and jumbled. And there are remains to be sought for of Gaulish *oppida*, and Roman camps and feudal castles. And there are the little covered sanctuaries dedicated to some saint or other, at every spring of water; and chapels in glades of the woods;

and most abundant of all those crosses, Calvaries, in grey stone, that stand wherever a few houses are clustered together, and often in lonely places where you see them by themselves against the sky. Sometimes they are rich, these shrines of wayside prayer, and have figures of all the twelve Apostles standing about the foot of the cross; more commonly the column rises from a plain base of steps, and carries only at its summit the weather-worn images of Christ and of his mother. Both for these outdoor stone carvings, and for wooden images in the churches, there is a local style of much uncouthness, which continues still in practice and which one must not take as necessary evidence of antiquity. The churches themselves in these parts, with a few notable exceptions, belong to a belated provincial Gothic of the sixteenth or seventeenth century; they are always built on high ground, and with their steeples of open work, in which you can see the bells a-swing, form one of the most characteristic features of the country.

Then, over and above the visible works of nature and of man, every spot of soil or sea is full of legend and poetry. Wherever one has to do with Celts, that people of poets, one finds them atoning for all the disasters of their history by what has been well called a system of imaginary revenges. One finds them inventing a heroic past that never was; consoling themselves for the failures of their destiny by beautiful fancies, and throwing a grace over their hard unhopeful lives with romantic dreams, traditions, usages. These extremities of the Breton Cornwall, above almost all

other places, have been the haunt of the Celtic spirit and its poetry. I do not know how much of it still lives, either in memory or custom, among the people, whose ways are changing fast; but what has been collected in books is enough to make the whole ground alive to one. There is one great myth common to the Celtic race in many places, the myth which tells of a mighty city submerged for the wickedness of its inhabitants. In Ireland, the waters of Lough Neagh are supposed to cover the vestiges of such a city; and in Wales, the bay of Cardigan. But the myth has associated itself, in most detail and consistency, with this bay of Douarnenez. As a matter of fact, traces of Roman roads leading from inland to the bay, traces of Roman buildings on the Ile Tristan and at many points of the shore near the town of Douarnenez, point certainly to an important station which existed at this point of Gaul, and on ground upon which the sea has at least partially encroached. These remains, in the days when legends grew, must have been far more conspicuous than now. The popular imagination seems to have taken hold of them, and of the reputation of a certain Gradlon, who, as far as real history shows, seems to have had an historical existence as count over a small principality in the Black Mountains in the sixth or seventh century.* With these data,

* I waive of necessity all notice of the discussions which have raged in this matter between inquirers of different schools, for Gradlonism is a war-cry; but the result seems to be that the great King Gradlon of the fifth century seems to have been created by the Breton imagination out of a small Count Gradlon who lived in a later time.

and with that national myth of a submerged city in their brains, the people have fashioned a legend like this :—

Gradlon the Great was King of all Cornwall, and had his capital at Quimper. When he and his kingdom were converted by Saint Corentin, he made over the city of Quimper to the government of that saint, and went to live and rule his dominions from another city by the sea. This city was called Is, and was one of the mightiest and goodliest in the world. But men lived there too riotously. It was built on low ground beside the sea ; and the waters were kept out by a pair of great sluice-gates of which no man had the key—a key of pure gold—but the king only. Now King Gradlon had a daughter, the Princess Dahut, and loved her dearly. But Dahut cared neither for God nor man, and was first in all manner of riotousness ; and the lovers that were brought to her nightly she was wont to murder before dawn, and send their bodies to be flung into a pit far within the country. So God was angry against Dahut and against that city. And one day King Gradlon met Saint Corentin (or as others say his disciple Saint Guennolé) in the forest of Nevet ; and the saint said to him, " Beware ; for the wrath of God is about to make itself felt against thee and thine." But the king took no heed. And one night after the feast was over, the foul fiend came in the guise of a lover to Dahut, and caressed her, and asked her for the golden key from about her father's neck. And Dahut went to her father where he slept, and took the key from about his neck, and gave it to her lover.

And the foul fiend vanished away, and took the key, and turned it; and the sluice-gates were opened, and the waters went over the city. And King Gradlon leapt upon his horse and rode for life; and Dahut begged with a great voice that he would take her up behind him. And he took her up; but the sea pursued them; and a voice cried, "Let go the accursed one that rides behind thee," and Dahut's arms were loosened, and she fell and was drowned, and the waters were stayed; and the place where she fell is called Poul-Dahut to this day.

Poul-Dahut is the modern Poul-David, the estuary that separates Douarnenez from Tréboul. And there are a hundred tales told how Dahut still haunts the bay, and may be seen sitting on the rocks in the form of a siren, a presage of ill-weather; and how Gradlon's horse still ranges the country at night with tramp and neigh; and how in calm weather the fishermen look down through the blue, and see upon the sands of the bay the ruins of the wicked city—

> Old palaces and towers
> Quivering beneath the wave's intenser day.

Nor is that the only cycle of legends that haunts this region. The Celts of Brittany have a whole calendar of their own saints, and in places round about you shall be shown how Saint Corentin had his hermitage here, and Saint Guennolé or Saint Ronan wrought a miracle there, and so on without end. And as usual, emigrants from the island of Britain have not only carried the great Arthur cycle with them to these

coasts, but their descendants have identified its scenes with the places among which they themselves lived. Thus the Île Tristan, anciently and properly, it would seem, called Tutuarn after a saint of that name, has got to be thought of in connection with Sir Tristram of Lyonesse. And Plomarc'h, which is the name of that point of richest verdure, of woodpeckers and kingfishers by the rocks, is pointed out as the home of King Mark, the uncle of Sir Tristram and husband of Sir Tristram's mistress in the same legend; whereas in truth the whole tenor of the legend demands that Mark should have been king not of this but of our island Cornwall. Marc'h, Mark, means a horse, and it is curious to find the tale of Midas told of this King Mark of the popular imagination. He had horse's ears, and used to put all his barbers to death for fear they should tell of it. One day he suffered a friend, sworn to secrecy, to do the barber's office and live afterwards. The friend must needs go and whisper the secret to the sands of the sea. In the place where he whispered there sprang up three reeds; certain bards cut these reeds to make music with, and the secret came along the music—Plomarc'h, Plomarc'h, the King of Plomarc'h has horse's ears. Again, when clouds roll in a dark procession, as one sees them sometimes, along the ridge of the Black Mountains and over the Mené-Hom, they say it is Arthur and his knights that ride abroad, and take it for a sign of coming war.

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Summer ends early in these lofty regions, and in September the party returned to Lanchow. The closing chapters of the book are occupied with the long journey southward—partly by road and partly by river—from Lanchow through the heart of China to the Yang-tse River, where the author takes leave of his readers.

It may be of interest to add that Mr. Farrer, fascinated by his experiences among Chinese people and Chinese flora, started last year on another adventurous journey into Southern China, but unhappily succumbed to illness in Upper Burmah in December, 1920.

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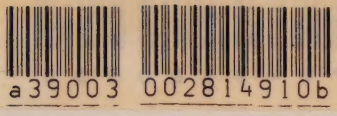
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